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War, go away

go to waste

Moscow

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"As long as there is no war!" — this slogan has been gained through suffering throughout Soviet history. The price of the Great Victory was so great, the losses were so monstrous, and the turning point in the people's fate was so terrible that the memory of the tragedy still hurts, already at the genetic level. Because any war, even the most just one, even the Great Patriotic War, is hell, blood and pain, unbearable suffering and irreparable losses... It is possible and should glorify the Victory and honor the heroes. But the war itself - perish it!

This book is a true history of the Second World War, without omissions and no regard for officialdom, without embellishment. This is the terrible truth about the greatest catastrophe in human history that hit our country the hardest.

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START

I remember this, although I was a little over four years old. We lived then in Dnepropetrovsk. Mom went to work, despite the day off, but we - father and I - had nowhere to hurry. We didn't get out of bed for a long time - in anticipation of going to the park with ice cream, soda and other delicious things. The room was flooded with sun. As soon as we got up, a neighbor flew in through the door: "Oh, darlings! So turn on the radio, Molotov to speak. War with the Germans!"

This is how the war started for me. Three days later, the father received a summons, he soon left. Almost every night there were air raid alerts. At first we obediently ran to the bomb shelter, but then my mother, unable to look at the throwing of people who lost their loved ones in the crowd, said: "If we are destined to die, let it happen with dignity." We stayed at home - in the dark behind painted windows, listening to the howling of sirens and exploding bombs. Then there was an evacuation, the train was bombed many times along the way, but we got to Stavropol, where we remained until the summer of forty-two. There were no letters from my father, and my mother ran to the station to meet ambulance trains, hoping that he might be there. Many women did this. Dad's sister, Aunt Zhenya, was drafted into the army as a doctor, she ended up right in the Stalingrad inferno. Soon we had to walk away from the Germans, who had grown as if out of the ground. German planes were circling in the steppe above the columns of refugees. The pilots had fun shooting people with machine guns who had nowhere to hide... Through the inhospitable villages, where the inhabitants did not want to communicate with us, we dragged ourselves to Ordzhonikidze, left by train for Baku, crossed on a small boat to Krasnovodsk, then a whole month or more

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we were loafing and starving on the train, first on an open platform, and then in a calf carriage, until late in the autumn of 1942 we ended up in Tomsk. Father, thank God, returned from the war alive, shell-shocked, almost deaf, but alive; many of my peers were not so lucky... Aunt Zhenya remained in the service, having abandoned her scientific career in epidemiology. She was told that she was more needed in the Soviet Army.

As I grew older, I learned, not without amazement, that the cause of the war, alas, did not boil down to Hitler's treachery alone, that Stalin and Molotov, the same one who spoke on the radio on June 22, also had a hand in this. This book contains much of what I have read over the past years and changed my mind about this war. This is not a monograph and not a chronicle of exploits and battles. There will be mainly what precedes the war or takes place behind the scenes. I think specialists will find little new in the book; it will be of more interest to those who were born after the war and are familiar with it mainly from films. Older people also often do not know too much about the political and strategic events of that time. In the former Soviet Union, the actual side of this damned war was buried under heaps of military patriotic propaganda and targeted lies. The collapse of the USSR made it possible to tell the truth, but at the same time gave rise to tabloid versions of events. My main goal is to show the misfortune of peoples going to fight on the orders of their beloved leaders and adored Fuhrers.

Is there any practical use in knowing history? Only if we are ready to take advantage of its lessons. Prince Bismarck once remarked that fools learn from their own experience, he prefers to learn from the experience of others.

This book is personal from beginning to end, it contains my thoughts, considerations and information. Quite possibly, I needed to write it in order to understand the events and springs of this misfortune myself. Regardless of our will and desire, for my generation - and not only for mine - the Soviet-German war became the central, perhaps the defining event of life. For us, the expressions "before the war", "during the war", etc. acquired meaning immediately, did not require clarification. The most important and most terrible thing is that this war

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cost my country 27 million lives, which is half of all deaths in the world. Speaking about the preparation and conduct of the war, I tried to understand why so many.

Least of all should this book be seen as an attempt to say the last word on this accursed war. It has long been said by soldiers and civilians, abundantly strewn with their corpses on the soil of the planet.

ON THE WAY TO A BIG WAR. 1939-1940

PACT RIBBENTROP-MOLOTOV

In essence, the Soviet Union entered, it would be better to say, got involved in the war in the fall [1939], attacking Poland, but for almost two years the government pretended that the country continued to live in peace. The consequences of this attack and this non-recognition turned out to be catastrophic, turning into incredible suffering for the Soviet people and millions of lost lives. The population, it should be noted, also did not have a clear understanding. Both the leaders and the cogs and bolts obedient to them talked about the war in the future tense. Such an interpretation may seem unusual or incorrect, but what follows will, I hope, make it clearer.

From Rapallo (1922) until Hitler came to power (January 1933), relations between Germany and the USSR were friendly. Stepsons of Versailles, the two countries worked closely together to break the bonds of this treaty. The Germans could develop and test on Soviet territory such types of weapons prohibited to them, such as tanks and aircraft. The USSR received technical assistance; Soviet specialists, especially military specialists, studied in Germany. There was a brisk trade between the two countries.

The Soviet leadership, indirectly and against their will, paved the way for Hitler to power. At the Sixth Congress of the Comintern (1928), on the initiative of Stalin, a resolution was adopted ordering the communists to concentrate on the fight against the socialist parties (social fascists). For this reason, after the elections of 1932, the German Communist Party did not begin to bloc with the Social Democrats,

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together, these two parties could form a solid counterweight to the National Socialists.

On August 2 [1934] President Hindenburg died. On the same day, the [Germany] armed forces were given a new oath of allegiance to Hitler personally: "I swear before God by this sacred oath that I will meekly obey the Führer of the German state and people, Adolf Hitler, Supreme Commander of the armed forces and as a brave soldier I will always be ready to sacrifice my life in the name of this oath."

The text of this oath, unusual for Germany, was compiled by General Walter von Reichenau. Shortly before this, on June 30, Hitler quickly and decisively cracked down on the leadership of the storm troopers (SA), led by his friend Ernst Röhm, along with some of his political opponents. Rem's detachments by this time numbered up to 4 million members, he sought to pour them into the Reichswehr, the number of which, due to Versailles restrictions, was only 100 thousand. The generals did not at all smile at the prospect of being dissolved in a sea of attack aircraft. The Reichswehr took charge of the June operation against Röhm. SS teams were stationed in the army barracks, where they received weapons. On July 3, Minister of War Blomberg, with the support of all the generals, defined the massacre of June 30 "as actions to protect the state." Hitler, in his opinion, "acted like a statesman and a soldier."

This "night of long knives" made a deep impression on Stalin; her example undoubtedly played a role in the mass beating of party and state cadres in [1937-1938]. The armed forces suffered heavy losses in these repressions, especially the highest command personnel. By the end of 1938, the orgy of arrests and executions began to subside, although repressions continued. In February [1939] the text of the new military oath was approved. It differed from the solemn promise adopted by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee in April [1918] only in the wording of the wording. Instead of "I am the son of the working people" was "I, a citizen of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics"; instead of "in the face of the working classes of Russia and the whole world, I undertake to bear this title with honor, conscientiously study military affairs and, like the apple of my eye, protect people's and military property from

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damage and plunder" now stood "I swear to conscientiously study military affairs, to protect military and national property in every possible way and to my last breath to be devoted to my people, my Soviet Motherland and the Soviet government", etc. The main difference was who approved the text of the new oath: not the Presidium of the Supreme Council, which replaced the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, but the sole member of the Main Military Council of the Red Army, Joseph Vissarionovich STALIN. Not daring to follow the German example of a personal oath, he still put his personal stamp.

During the first years of [Hitler's] power [Germany was in diplomatic isolation. True, the Polish-German non-aggression pact was concluded (1934), France responded to this by strengthening ties with its allies in Eastern Europe (Little Entente). Hitler feared that the French might, as ten years ago, occupy the Rhineland. Stalin

meanwhile, he also drew some conclusions: the USSR went for rapprochement with France, joined the League of Nations, the Comintern adopted the policy of the Popular Front, a broad coalition of communists and socialists against fascism.

The initial support of the army helped Hitler to gain a foothold in power, after which he quickly showed who was the boss. The small and close-knit officer corps, which in 1933 numbered only 4 thousand people, was poured 25 thousand. Many of these newcomers had Nazi sympathies. The newly created Goering Air Force was not subordinate to the General Staff, they had their own ministry. In March 1935, announcing the program of rearmament of the army and the introduction of compulsory military service, Hitler did not even think to consult with the generals.

At the same time, the rapid militarization of the USSR was taking place. The Red Army grew by leaps and bounds: 1933 - 562 thousand people, 1934 - 940 thousand, 1935 - 1 million 300 thousand. The budget of the People's Commissariat of Defense, which in 1933 amounted to 1.5 billion rubles, in the following year reached about a billion, and in 1938 - 23 billion rubles, by 1940 this last figure was more than doubled. The industrialization of the country, which ate almost half of the gross national product, was aimed at war.

After Hitler became Chancellor in January 1933, the Nazis began vigorously to seize the German state.

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donation. The alarmed leader of Poland, Pilsudski, offered the French a preventive attack on Germany, they refused. In contrast to the Polish marshal, the Kremlin was one of the first to actually recognize the Hitler regime in May by ratifying an addendum to the 1926 Treaty of Friendship with Germany. Stalin and his entourage remained Germanophiles even when the Nazis began to brutally and methodically persecute communists in Germany. In January 1934, Stalin declared at the 17th Congress of the CPSU (6):

"Some German politicians say about this that the USSR is now orienting itself towards France and Poland, that from an opponent of the Treaty of Versailles it has become its supporter, that this change is explained by the establishment of a fascist regime in Germany. This is not true. Of course, we are far from being enthusiastic about the fascist regime in Germany. But the point here is not fascism, if only because fascism, for example, in Italy, did not prevent the USSR from establishing the best relations with that country."

Hitler did not reply to this overture. An ideological struggle flared up between Nazism and communism, but it was a war of words, neither side had plans to attack its sworn enemy. The political regimes in the USSR and Germany were extremely hostile to each other, but in some respects they were very similar: both were totalitarian, one-party, and thoroughly ideological. There was another similarity: the Germans called it the Fuhrer-principle (Ertegripgr). The political system rested on the hierarchy of Fuhrers (leaders, leaders) headed by the main dictator. Ideology and politics to a large extent depended on the leaders, were built on their actual deification. In Germany, this principle was enshrined in law: Hitler did away with the appearance of elective institutions and could officially appoint anyone he wanted to any position; the army and police swore allegiance to him personally; each sphere was administered by a Führer appointed by him. In the USSR, the subordination of the state and all spheres of life to Stalin was no less complete, although not formalized in legislative acts. For this reason, the personalities of the Fuhrer leaders played a huge role in the preparation and conduct of the war.

By the end of the 30s, the USSR and Germany were heavily armed and threatened each other with propaganda fists. The real confrontation took place only in Spain.

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Trade turnover between the two countries fell in 1939 to a ridiculous figure of [1 million marks. However, in the spring of this year, the mood in both Moscow and Berlin changed dramatically. The first signal that the USSR was changing its position on collective security came on March 3 in Zhdanov's speech at a party conference in Leningrad. His main idea was formulated as follows: England wants fascism to unleash a war against the Soviet Union. But we are on the alert, we will "accumulate our strength for the time when we will deal with Hitler and Mussolini, and at the same time, of course, with Chamberlain." The Kremlin leadership had grounds for dissatisfaction. The policy of orientation towards the West did not bear fruit. Moreover, when European powers gathered in Munich to solve their problems at the expense of small countries, as in the old days, the USSR was not invited there.

Stalin considered himself, however strange it may seem, a Russian, a Great Russian, and treated other peoples of the USSR with condescension and a certain amount of contempt. He especially disliked the Jews and shared all the prejudices and stereotypes about them that had accumulated among Christians. At the same time, he was not a pathological racist, like Hitler, and knew how to mask his dislike when necessary. January 12, 1931, in response to a request from the Jewish Telegraph Agency of the United States, the Soviet leader stated:

"National and racial chauvinism is a survival of the hateful mores characteristic of the period of cannibalism. Anti-Semitism, as an extreme form of racial chauvinism, is the most dangerous survival of cannibalism."

Meanwhile, in 1936, in the midst of frenzied anti-fascist propaganda, Stalin ordered the editor of Pravda, the Jew Mekhlis, to print Jewish journalists under pseudonyms: there was nothing to tease Hitler. The leader always had a desire to get along with the Germans. Stalin and Zhdanov considered themselves experts in European affairs, especially with regard to [Germany. Still would! They read a translation of "Mein Kampf" specially made for them, as well as the memoirs of Prince Bismarck, and on occasion exchanged thoughtful remarks understandable to THEM ONLY.

A week after Zhdanov's speech, Stalin made it clear to the German Fuhrer that he wanted to enter into negotiations. He

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did this in his report at the 18th party congress, which met from 10 to 21 March. Here is a long quote:

"Or, for example, take Germany. They ceded Austria to it ... they ceded the Sudetenland, abandoned Czechoslovakia to the mercy of fate, violating all and all obligations, and then they began to blatantly lie in the press about the "weakness of the Russian army", about the "decay of Russian aviation", about "disturbances" in the Soviet - Soviet Union, pushing the Germans further east, promising them easy prey and saying: just start a war with the Bolsheviks, and then everything will go well ... this is also very similar to pushing, to encouraging the aggressor. Characteristic is the uproar that the Anglo-French and North American press raised about the Soviet Ukraine... It seems that this suspicious noise was intended to raise the fury of the Soviet Union against Germany, poison the atmosphere and provoke a conflict with Germany without visible reasons <...> One might think that the Germans were given the regions of Czechoslovakia as a price for the obligation to start a war with the Soviet Union, and the Germans now refuse to pay the bill, sending them somewhere far away.

The Soviet dictator believed in the existence of a secret collusion between the "imperialists" and the Germans, from which the latter wanted to free themselves. In the days of the congress, precisely on March 15, German troops completely occupied Czechoslovakia. At the end of the month, Lithuania ceded Memel (Klaipėda) to Germany. At the same time, Hitler told Brauchitsch that if Poland did not meet his demands, he would use force. At the same time, the Führer did not ask the opinion or advice of his commander in chief of the ground forces.

Stalin openly told Hitler: the Anglo-French imperialists are trying to pit us head-on, but we have no complaints against you, we can get along. This time, Hitler did not remain deaf to the call from Moscow. In his speech | April in Wilhelmshaven, the usual abuse of the Bolsheviks was replaced by attacks on England and France. On April 3, Keitel received an order from the Führer to prepare an operation against Poland ("White Plan"). Keitel believed that the German army did not have enough ammunition, but after the success in Munich, it was unthinkable to object to Hitler. In addition, he, like Blomberg before him, considered Hitler a genius capable of

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making the impossible possible. At the end of May, the General Staff began drawing up plans for the deployment of troops with a completion date no later than August 20 (Coert2, H!\$oru o {Nertap Sepegałai, 1657 - 1945, p. 344).

On April 7, Foreign Minister Ribbentrop instructed an official of the Ministry, Peter Kleist, to establish contacts with Soviet diplomats. A week later, Kleist was already visiting Astakhov's chargé d'affaires. He took the bull by the horns: there is no point for Germany and the USSR to continue the ideological struggle, while they could pursue a coordinated policy (Nekrich), it is time to step over the shadows of the past and take care of our common interests. Ribbentrop was not ready for such speed. "For the time being, avoid meeting Astakhov," he told Kleist. "I don't think the Führer likes that sort of talk." Events still unfolded.

In the same Nekrich we read that on April 17 the USSR proposes to Britain and France to conclude an agreement for 5-10 years on mutual assistance and assistance to the Eastern European states located between the Baltic and Black Seas and bordering on the USSR in case of aggression against these states. - gifts. The proposals of the USSR provided for the conclusion of a military convention. And on the same day, the Soviet plenipotentiary in Berlin, A. Merekalov, told the German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop that the Soviet Union would like to normalize relations with Germany. This relationship could get "better and better"; ideological differences should not be an obstacle.

On May 3, in the evening, the building of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs on Kuznetsky Most was surrounded by NKVD troops. The arriving Politburo commission, consisting of Molotov, Malenkov, Beria and Dekanozov, informed People's Commissar Litvinov (real name Meir Valakh) that he must clear the office. His place was taken by Molotov, who remained chairman of the Council of People's Commissars. He received a mandate from Stalin to purge the diplomatic service of Jews and disperse the synagogue that had gathered there. At that time, most of the Soviet ambassadors were the sons of Moses. Molotov believed that this was not normal and carried out the leader's instructions. Is it true,

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the purge of the Jews was not as complete as in the 40s: Solomon Lozovsky became one of the deputies of the people's commissar.

On May 4, from a brief note on the last page of Izvestia, the world learned that Litvinov had been relieved of his duties "of his own free will." The very next day, Astakhov visited Karl Schnurre, head of the East European Policy Department of the German Foreign Ministry. He reported to his minister: "Astakhov touched on the removal of Litvinov and tried, without asking direct questions, to find out whether this event would lead to a change in our position regarding the Soviet Union" (Koryakov, Living History, p. 203 -204).

Hitler later admitted that the news of Litvinov's replacement reached him "like a cannon shot." In the eyes of the Nazis, the Russian Molotov, although married to a Jewess, was much more acceptable than the Jew Litvinov, whose wife was an Englishwoman! Stalin clearly sought to speed up the rapprochement, Hitler desperately needed guarantees that the USSR would not intervene when [Germany attacked Poland in the fall, but it was not so easy to "step over the shadows of the past".

Things moved a little faster at the end of July. On the 26th, Shnurre invited Astakhov and Deputy Trade Representative Babarin to dinner. With only a month left before the invasion of Poland, the Germans decided to make concessions: they expressed their readiness to give up their interests in the Baltics and Romania if they were granted freedom of action in Poland; at the same time, the Russians should not enter into an alliance with England. Again there was a lull for two weeks. Finally, on August 14, Ribbentrop conveyed emergency instructions to his ambassador in Moscow, Schulenburg. The ambassador is reported to inform Molotov, and then to Stalin:

"...the interests [of Germany and the USSR do not clash anywhere. Living spaces [Germany and the USSR are adjacent to each other, but there is no natural need for clashes... Germany has no aggressive intentions towards the USSR The imperial government is of the opinion that there are no issues that could not be settled to the full satisfaction of both States. Among these issues, there are those related to the Baltic Sea, the Baltic States, Poland, the southeastern region, and so on. Since negotiations through the usual channels have dragged on, Ribbentrop is ready to come to Moscow.

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on a short visit in order to present the views of the Fuhrer to Herr Stalin on behalf of the Fuhrer.

On August 16, Molotov told Schulenburg that the Soviet government was interested in the visit of the German minister, but preparations would take time. He did not name a specific date. This uncertainty was like a sharp knife for Berlin.

On August 19, the Mikoyan-Schnurre trade and credit agreement was finally signed in Berlin, in connection with which Molotov announced that Ribbentrop might come to Moscow in a week. On the same day, the Germans received the Soviet text of the non-aggression pact with the proviso that its signing would take place simultaneously with the signing of the secret protocol on foreign policy issues, which would be an integral part of the pact. On August 20, Hitler received a personal message to Stalin:

"The tension between [Germany and Poland has become unbearable. Poland's behavior towards the great powers is such that a crisis may break out any day... In my opinion, it is desirable, in view of the intentions of both countries, to enter without wasting time into a new phase of relations with each other. I therefore propose once again to receive my Minister for Foreign Affairs on Tuesday 22 August, at the latest Wednesday 23 August. The Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs has full authority to draw up and sign both the non-aggression pact and the protocol."

When reading the translation of [Hitler's] telegram, Stalin emphasized the expression "a crisis can break out any day." Both sides were well aware that the signing of the pact, and especially the secret protocol, opened the way for a German attack on Poland.

The tension in Berlin reached its breaking point. Initially, only Ribbentrop was an ardent supporter of the pact, and [Hitler expressed doubts, now the Führer was feverishly impatient. On August 21, at 5 pm, Molotov conveyed to Schulenburg Stalin's answer: yes, they were ready to receive Ribbentrop on August 23. The next day [Hitler gathered in the Berghof, his estate in the Bavarian Alps, the highest military ranks. Without waiting for the formal signing of the pact, he regarded it as a fait accompli. Having informed the audience about the readiness of the Russians to conclude an agreement, he joyfully exclaimed (Halder, pp. 55-56):

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"Thus, I knocked out of the hands of the Western masters [England and France] their weapons. We have brought Poland into a position most convenient for us to achieve military success... Stalin writes that this course promises great benefits to both sides. A gigantic turnaround in all European politics.

According to Hitler, he had all the main cards in his hands: England and France are weak, Germany and Italy are strong and united around their leaders, and everything like that (Ca[ulder, p. 25):

"Now we can strike at the heart of Poland. I send to the East my units of the SS "Dead Head" with the order to kill without any pity or mercy all men, women and children of the Polish race or language.

At this moment Goering jumped up on the table and started a wild dance. His costume was operatic: a green sleeveless knee-length jacket with yellow leather buttons over a white shirt, gray shorts and knee-length silk stockings of the same color, as well as massive lace-up boots. Here is the impression of one officer (Egerton Hopper, p. 109): "Hermann Goering ... had the appearance of a clown; in a white uniform in the middle of winter and violet boots above the knees, he looked like a general from an operetta") .

The Fuhrer continued:

"The only thing I'm afraid of is that at the last moment some Zsigmondy [German square swearing, literally: pig dog] will offer his mediation... There is no time to waste. The war must take place while I live. I need this pact only to gain time, and then, gentlemen, I will deal with Russia in the same way as with Poland – we will crush the Soviet Union."

Hitler named 26 August as the tentative date for the start of the operation. The next day it was announced by order.

Ribbentrop with a retinue of 30 people flew to Moscow at one in the afternoon on August 23 on the Fuhrer's private plane. The airport was decorated with swastika flags; they were brought from the Mosfilm studio, where anti-fascist films were made. After a short stop at the German embassy for a breakfast of champagne and caviar, the German minister went to the Kremlin and conferred with Stalin and Molotov for three hours.

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you m. At 20:05 Moscow time, a telegram went to Berlin:

"During the discussion, which proceeded positively in our spirit, moreover, it turned out that the last obstacle to the final decision is the demand of the Russians for us to recognize the ports of Libava (Liepaja) and Vindava (Ventspils) as part of their sphere of interest. "

Exactly three hours later, the Fuhrer replied: "Yes, I agree." The meeting resumed, the parties quickly came to an agreement. When the spheres of influence were divided, Germany received the western part of Poland and Lithuania, the USSR - the rest of Poland, Bessarabia, Finland, Estonia and Latvia.

While the technical staff prepared the final text of the documents, the celebration began. Opened champagne. The German report gives this picture of further libations:

"Mr. Molotov drank to the health of the Reich Foreign Minister and Ambassador Count von Schulenburg.

[Mr. Molotov raised his glass to Stalin, noting that it was Stalin who, with his speech in March of this year, which was correctly understood in Germany, completely changed political relations.

Messrs. Molotov and Stalin drank again to the Non-Aggression Pact, to the new era in German-Russian relations and to the German nation. The Reich Foreign Minister, in turn, proposed a toast to Herr Stalin, to the Soviet government, and to the favorable development of relations between Germany and the Soviet Union.

At parting, Mr. Stalin addressed the Reich Foreign Minister with the following words: "The Soviet government takes the new pact very seriously. He can give his word of honor that the Soviet Union will never betray its partner."

Concerning this promise, John Erickson (EisKosop, The zome(Nlyun Sottapa, p. 530) remarked: "For the honest observance of this dishonorable collusion, Stalin finally paid with the corpses of Russians."

Stalin proposed a toast to Hitler: "I know how much the German nation loves its leader, and therefore I want to drink to his health."

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Before pronouncing this toast, Stalin ordered that vodka be brought. SS officer Richard Schultz later poured himself a drink from the same decanter and discovered that it was water. Stalin noticed and smiled.

The ceremony of signing the pact and the secret protocol took place after midnight, at 2 am on 24 August. On August 25, the Fuhrer's order to march on Poland was postponed - for political reasons. On the 28th, speaking to his Gauleiters, Hitler characterized the newly signed agreement as "a pact with Satan to cast out the Devil" (GiKas\$, p. 104). Finally, on August 31, when the Supreme Soviet of the USSR ratified the Soviet-German pact, [itler named a new date for the attack - 1 September. There were 14 hours left before the start of World War II.

SOVIET-GERMAN PACT: ATMOSPHERE AND CONSEQUENCES

After the signing of the pact, Soviet-German relations changed beyond recognition. Yesterday's irreconcilable opponents merged in a passionate embrace. In Moscow, the expression sworn friends went. 1 September, Pravda published Molotov's statement made the day before at the session of the Supreme Soviet:

"The conclusion of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact shows that Comrade Stalin's historical foresight has come true.

Yes, yesterday we were enemies in the area of foreign relations. Today, however, the situation has changed and we have ceased to be enemies.

These people demand that the USSR be drawn into the war on the side of England against Germany. Have these presumptuous warmongers gone mad? (Laughter). If these gentlemen have such an irresistible desire to fight, let them fight on their own, without the Soviet Union (Laughter. Applause). We would see what kind of warriors they are (Laughter. Applause). "

On September 2, Hitler responded in his speech to the Reichstag:

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"I can join every word that People's Commissar Molotov said in connection with this..."

It was a miracle, which, alas, was destined for a short LIFE.

The Moscow agreement of 23 August was historic and sensational. Subsequently, it caused a fair amount of trouble for Soviet propaganda. After the war, the official explanation was established: with the help of the pact, the USSR delayed the German attack. This, as is easy to see, contradicts the facts, because in the summer of 1939 Hitler was not going to fight the Soviet Union, he desperately needed guarantees of Soviet non-intervention in relation to Poland.

Stalin concluded a pact with Hitler out of political, more precisely, sovereign considerations. The Anschluss of Austria and the capture of Czechoslovakia marked a new situation on the European continent. The Treaty of Versailles and the agreements that flowed from it, above all Locarno, hung in the air. Stalin and his advisers could not help but recall the territories ceded to Poland under the Riga Treaty of 1921, as well as the former parts of the Russian Empire - Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia. This new position was expressed by Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Vladimir Potemkin. In the autumn of 1938, in the wake of the Munich agreement, he reproached the French ambassador in Moscow, R. Coulondre (see A. G. R. Taufg, p. 186):

"What have you done, my poor friend! For us, I now see no other way out than the fourth section of Wormwood.

At the end of 1938 [Hitler proposed to the Polish ambassador in Berlin a joint campaign against the USSR. The Polish Prime Minister Beck and the colonels who were in power after the death of Pilsudski looked down on the Austrian corporal and did not deign to answer him. In the spring of the following year, Hitler, having finally swallowed Czechoslovakia, began to extort Danzig from Poland. The Nazi propaganda flooded the world with stories about the unbearable suffering of the Germans under the Polish yoke in Pomerania and Upper Silesia, and demanded the elimination of the "Polish corridor". When Hitler turned to threats, Britain and France hurried on March 31 to give Poland guarantees of territorial integrity. Chamberlain felt himself up to his ears in mud. It was he who raped the Czechs so that they would give the Sudetenland to Hitler in response to the promise that Germany would no longer have claims against them.

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When the Germans occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia six months later, Chamberlain wrung his hands in impotence. The guarantees to Poland were a mixture of bluff and fantasy, since the British and French had neither access to Poland by land nor sufficient troops. |

It was not possible to intimidate Hitler. At that moment, he, more than ever, was confident in himself and in the support of the Germans. || April, he gave the order to develop a plan for a surprise attack on Poland ("White operation"). He was eager to refute the British-French bluff. The Western allies told the representatives of the USSR that if the Red Army sent 120 divisions against Germany, they would provide 86. German intelligence reported that England could send three divisions to Europe, no more.

The situation is completely surreal. The British still regarded the USSR as a second-rate power, but they highly valued the military merits of the Polish army. The French, whose internal political position was unstable, were forced to follow in the British wake. At the same time, they understood that only the Soviet Union could really carry out the mission of protecting Poland. The Poles, for their part, did not want to let the Red Army into their borders, fearing that it would never leave.

For this reason, the talks between England, France and the USSR in the summer of 1939 in Moscow were unpromising from the very beginning. The Soviet leadership had every reason not to take the Anglo-French seriously. On June 29, even before the start of negotiations, an article by Zhdanov appeared in Pravda:

"We preferred an agreement with the so-called democratic countries and therefore we negotiated. But the British and French wanted to have us as farm laborers and, moreover, not pay anything for it.

The tirade clearly reflected Stalin's thoughts, and perhaps even dictated by him. The British and the French traveled to the USSR, slowly - by sea to Leningrad. Negotiations opened on August 10 in Moscow; It soon became clear that the British delegation did not have the authority to sign any agreement. After this was settled, there was still no progress - due to the uncompromising position of Warsaw. The French hinted to the Soviet representatives that the Poles and Romanians could be put

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before the fait accompli, that is, to help them without asking their consent, but the British did not agree to such a step. At this time, the Germans increased pressure on Stalin in order to conclude a pact as soon as possible. On August 14, the Politburo decided in principle that it preferred to negotiate with the Germans. Voroshilov, who negotiated with the British and French, was absent from this meeting. Stalin decided that he should not tell him about the decision for the time being: being in the dark, Voroshilov would be able to lead Western representatives by the nose with great success.

The pact with Germany seemed irresistibly tempting to Soviet leaders, since Hitler recognized Soviet claims to eastern Poland, the Baltic states, and Bessarabia, which Stalin would never have received from Western democracies. True, there were no guarantees that Hitler would abide by the agreement. He recently broke the deal reached in Munich, and even earlier he stopped fulfilling the Locarno Treaty. But the temptation was still too great.

In 1939, moral considerations did not play a serious role in the Kremlin. Taylor makes this remark (p. 108):

"... it is hard to believe that Lenin and Trotsky, with all their contempt for bourgeois morality, would put their signatures under Soviet-Nazi pact.

Of course, in their defense, Stalin and the Politburo could say that if England and France could sacrifice Czechoslovakia for their own interests, then the USSR had the right to do the same with Poland. It is significant that the most important strategic decision to conclude a pact with Germany was made in the absence of the only member of the Politburo who had a hand in military affairs, although it is difficult to call him a strategist. Stalin and company practically ignored the military side of the matter, but here there was something to think about. Before the conclusion of the pact, the USSR did not have a common border with Germany. They were separated by a considerable buffer space, consisting of Poland and the Baltic countries. It was in this space that the war between Russia and Germany took place in [1914-1918]. To invade the Soviet Union, Hitler would have to violate the sovereignty of these countries. In addition, the USSR received an earlier warning and some time to prepare. A year after the pact, a common border appeared

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over 1000 km long. Now the potential adversary decided where to break it.

Stalin understood that the pact, while giving benefits to the USSR, at the same time helped Hitler to unleash a war against Poland. At the same time, Hitler expected that, as before, England and France would confine themselves to protests. When they declared war on Germany on September 3, Hitler and the Nazi leadership were shocked. We do not know Stalin's reaction, but there is an entry in the diary of Georgy Dimitrov, General Secretary of the Comintern, dated September 7:

"— In the Kremlin (Stalin, Molotov, Zhdanov).

Stalin:

- A war is going on between two groups of capitalist countries - (the poor and the rich in terms of colonies, raw materials, etc.) for the redivision of the world, for dominance over the world!

"Names don't mind if they fight well and weaken each other.

— Not bad if the position of the richest capitalist countries (especially England) were shaken by the hands of Germany.

"Hitler, without understanding or wanting to do this, shakes and undermines the capitalist system.

The Communists of the capitalist countries must come out resolutely against their governments, against the war.

"Before the war, opposing fascism to a democratic regime was absolutely correct. During a war between the imperialist powers, this is already wrong."

Stalin foresaw rich dividends for himself and did not expect trouble. The main question: "Can the USSR stay away from the armed conflict?" — was not even set. Stalin's tone and his subsequent behavior show that the answer would be in the affirmative. Yes, we can stand out of the fray. The imperialists will beat each other up and weaken each other, and meanwhile we will reap the rewards, that is to say, acquire territories. The Soviet leader remained in this good delusion for more than a year. After that, he began to console himself and his assistants with the thought that it was the German generals who wanted war with the USSR, and Hitler was holding them back.

On October 25, Stalin met with Dimitrov again to discuss the latter's program article "War and the Worker

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class of capitalist countries. Stalin recommended that all revolutionary slogans be removed from the article, leaving only statements like: "Down with the imperialist war!", "Down with the governments that stand for the war!" Such a course was in the hands of Nazi Germany, where the Communist Party was destroyed. The Communists of England and France were to act against the governments and populations of these countries.

We must pay tribute to the Western communists. Having received Stalin's directive, they, in the words of François Feret, demonstrated "an extraordinary discipline, unheard of in the history of mankind." There was a "sudden reorientation of a large army of fighters who adopted a policy diametrically opposed to that of the day before" (cited in: aelège, p. 358). Communists in all parts of the world, who had just advocated a war against fascism, now opposed such a war with no less enthusiasm.

PARTION OF POLAND

Having concluded a pact with Hitler, the Kremlin immediately assured the Poles that in the event of war it would maintain benevolent neutrality towards them, even supply military materials and equipment). These were, of course, empty promises.

| September Hitler posted on the borders with Poland - in East Prussia, Pomerania and Silesia - 44 divisions, including 2 tank and mechanized. That was almost all he had at that time. He left no serious reserve against France, guessing that Paris would not risk crossing the Rhine.

22 Polish divisions were deployed evenly along the front line and did not constitute a serious obstacle for the attackers. At the insistence of the Western powers, the mobilization was not announced in advance - so as not to provoke Hitler. From the very beginning, the Poles fought with excellent courage and without any hope of success. They had only one tank division, and even that was not fully equipped. More numerous cavalry, one division and seven separate brigades, fearlessly galloped on the German tanks and perished uselessly. Weak

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Polish aviation was almost completely destroyed on the airfields on the first day.

The reaction of the USSR is evident from the telegram that Molotov sent to Schulenburg on 8 September:

"I have received your message that German troops have entered Warsaw. Please convey my congratulations and greetings to the government of the German Empire. Molotov.

Stalin at that time was most interested in the question of the time of the Red Army's speech. He was afraid to enter Poland prematurely in order to avoid accusations of aggression and not find himself in a state of war with England and France. In addition, a certain decorum had to be observed. For so many years they have been conducting propaganda against the Nazis, and now they have suddenly become their allies. On September 3, Ribbentrop suggested to Molotov that Soviet troops immediately occupy the Polish territories provided for in the pact. Molotov agreed, but for two weeks the Red Army remained in place.

On the other hand, delaying too long was also fraught with danger. If the Poles, God forbid, had previously capitulated or signed a truce, then the appearance of the Red Army in Poland would have looked like a new war. [Therefore, they decided to invade immediately after the fall of Warsaw under the pretext that the Polish state had collapsed and the Soviet troops had come to save their brothers, Ukrainians and Belarusians. On September 14, Molotov asked Schulenburg: when the Germans were going to take Warsaw. The answer was: soon, within a few days. At the same time, the motivation for saving half-brothers provoked an energetic protest from Ribbentrop. Stalin agreed to change the wording. In a Soviet note to the Polish government, they wrote:

"Left to itself and left without leadership, Poland has become a convenient field for all sorts of accidents and surprises that could pose a threat to the USSR. Therefore, being neutral until now, the Soviet government can no longer be neutral about these facts.

The Soviet government cannot also be indifferent to the fact that the consanguineous Ukrainians and Byelorussians,

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living on the territory of Poland, abandoned to the mercy of fate, remained defenseless.

In view of this situation, the Soviet government ordered the High Command of the Red Army to order the troops to cross the border and take under their protection the lives and property of the population of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus.

The Red Army crossed the Polish border on 17 September. Warsaw still held out, but was surrounded by German troops. Stalin now had other concerns. In the secret protocol of the pact, the division of spheres of influence was formulated as follows:

In the event of a territorial and political rearrangement of the regions that are part of the Polish state, the border of the spheres of interests of Germany and the USSR will approximately run along the line of the rivers Nareva, Vistula and San.

It was assumed that in the future a small Polish state would be formed (in the Soviet language of those years - residual Poland). Now Stalin decided that he did not want to occupy the purely Polish regions around Warsaw and Lublin. He offered the Germans a deal: the USSR would cede to them the Lublin Voivodeship and part of the Warsaw Voivodeship, and in return receive Lithuania and the Vilna Region, which was then in Poland. After a short trade, the parties agreed that Germany would also receive a ledge between East Prussia and Lithuania with the city of Suwalki along the line north of Augustow; Lithuania thus fell into the Soviet sphere. At the same time, the question of "residual Poland" was resolved, in the sense that it would not exist. Hitler had to agree.

The Red Army instead of Lublin and Warsaw went to Brest and Lvov. 466 thousand Soviet troops entered Poland, the losses amounted to 996 killed and 2002 wounded (Ÿjan {2 apa Noize, p. 17).

The new border along the Western Bug had certain political advantages. The USSR received the territories that were due to it according to the Versailles decisions (the Curzon line). Stalin and Molotov rubbed their hands in satisfaction: 200,000 square kilometers of territory with a population of 13 million people came under Moscow's control.

The Soviet invasion finally decided the fate of Poland. 18 September Polish government, President Moschitz

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ki and commander-in-chief Marshal Rydz-Smygly crossed the Romanian border. The last order of the marshal ordered the troops to seek refuge in the territory of neutral countries, and from there to make their way to France, where the revival of the Polish army would take place.

England and France, which had declared war on Germany over Poland, watched the Soviet invasion indifferently. Perhaps they hoped that in Moscow they would come to their senses and return to the idea of collective security. Be that as it may, in relation to the Poles, Western democracies have shown a record hypocrisy. When the Polish ambassador reminded the British Foreign Office of the guarantees, the answer was that a guarantee of an ally's independence cannot be interpreted as a guarantee of the inviolability of that ally's frontiers (see Ramez, p. 155). Later, they showed complete indifference to the fate of 25,000 Polish officers who disappeared in Soviet captivity. Once again, small countries were given to understand that they were just pawns in the game of great powers.

Together with the Wehrmacht, three divisions of the Waffen SS entered Poland, whose task was not to fight, but to destroy the ruling class and the intelligentsia of Poland (@oyi7, p. 358). The Soviet authorities were preoccupied with the same concerns, as evidenced by Katyn and mass repressions in the newly acquired territories. On one point, the Nazis were ahead of the Bolsheviks - they began to isolate the Polish Jews in order to exterminate them completely.

Fruitful cooperation between the security agencies of the two countries dates back to this time (Dames, p. 153):

"In matters of security, the Gestapo/SS and the NKVD worked hand in hand. The SS handed over Ukrainian nationalists to the Soviet authorities in response to handing over German communists to the Germans. Both sides acted against the Polish resistance together".

Hitler did not warn his generals of the upcoming Soviet invasion of Poland. Serious conflicts did not come out of this, but there were minor skirmishes and misunderstandings that were quickly extinguished. The Fuhrer did not want complications with Stalin. Warsaw fell on 27 September. And although in some places hostilities continued until October 5, the victors hurried to divide the booty. September 28 to Moscow

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Tel Ribbentrop. Hitler gave him three tasks. The main one was (see Bezymensky "Hitler and Stalin ...", ch. 17): "Probe the possibility of turning the non-aggression pact into closer cooperation with the aim of concluding a formal alliance in future battles with the Western powers."

The Führer also instructed his minister to obtain more substantial compensation for Lithuania and to ascertain Soviet intentions regarding the Baltics.

Stalin's answer to the main question was evasive and in the negative. Having paid tribute to Ribbentrop that he is not looking for a formal military alliance between the USSR and Germany, he gave the following assurance:

"But if Germany, contrary to expectations, falls into a difficult situation, then one can be sure that the Soviet people will come to the aid of Germany and will not allow Germany to be strangled. The Soviet Union is interested in a strong Germany and will not allow it to be thrown to the ground.

The patronizing tone shows that the Soviet leader considered the USSR militarily stronger than Germany. Regarding Lithuania, Stalin offered to cede a piece of Lithuanian territory to Germany for a monetary reward, the so-called. "Suwalki ledge". He also spoke in favor of expanding trade between the two countries and any other cooperation (including, as practice has shown, between the Gestapo and the NKVD).

After midnight, the Kremlin signed the Friendship and Border Treaty. Friendship was introduced at the suggestion of the Germans. The preamble was:

"The government of the USSR and [the German government, after the collapse of the former Polish state, regard it as their sole task to restore peace and order in this territory and to ensure a peaceful existence for the peoples living there, corresponding to their national characteristics."

This document formalized the partition of Poland. Poles and Jews were under the threat of destruction.

On October 31, at a session of the Supreme Soviet, Molotov delivered his most inglorious speech. With rare disdain, he said about Poland:

"The ruling circles of Poland boasted a lot about the "strength" of their state and the "power" of their army. However,

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A short blow against Poland, first by the German army and then by the Red Army, was enough to leave nothing of this ugly offspring of the Treaty of Versailles, which lived off the oppression of non-Polish nationalities.

At the same time, he sang a eulogy to the Nazis:

"It is known, for example, that over the past few months such concepts as "aggression", "aggressor" have received a new concrete content, acquired a new meaning. It is easy to guess that now we cannot use these concepts in the same sense as, say, 3-4 months ago. Now, speaking of the great powers of Europe, Germany is in the position of a state striving for a speedy end to the war and peace, while England and France, who only yesterday stood up against aggression, stand for the continuation of the war and against the conclusion of peace. The roles, as you can see, are changing.

Goebbels wrote in his diary:

"He said everything we wanted to say."

On the night of November 11-12, German planes dropped two million leaflets with Molotov's speech on French positions.

WAR WITH FINLAND

It was not in vain that Hitler was interested in Soviet intentions regarding the Baltics. Stalin's plans were the most serious: he was going to take over the countries of this region - gradually, with the help of mutual assistance pacts, which provided for the agreement of these countries to have Soviet military bases on their territory. Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia had to agree. In October, these unequal treaties were signed.

With Finland, things were different (Entry of the Soviet Union into World War II. 1939 (documents):

"On October 31, 1939, the Soviet government demanded from Finland the demilitarization of the border zone with its powerful defensive Mannerheim Line, as well as the liquidation of naval bases on the Hanko Peninsula and the Aland Islands.

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The next day, after the expected failure and hitherto incomprehensible artillery shelling of the positions of the Red Army, Soviet troops attacked Finland. The creation of the Democratic Republic of Finland was proclaimed and its government was created, headed by the well-known figure of the Comintern O. Kuusinen - diplomatic relations were immediately established with this government (all this took place in Moscow, although Finnish addresses were always indicated; many documents of the new government were written by A. A. Zhdanov).

In December, the USSR was expelled from the League of Nations with the wording "aggressor state".

The war with Finland moved on to 1940 and ended on March 12.

Stalin did not doubt for a moment that the campaign in Finland would be a pleasure trip for the Red Army. Otherwise it is impossible to explain the decision to start the war in winter and without any preparation.

Tiny Finland with a population of 4 million people. gathered under her banners everyone she could - about 200 thousand. The Finns had 100 aircraft, not all combat aircraft, and about the same number of anti-tank guns, as well as two dozen tanks. At the beginning of the war, due to the lack of uniforms, many conscripts fought in what they came from home. Since the Finns retained the caliber of small arms as they were in the tsarist army, they could use Soviet ammunition. Finnish soldiers were trained to conduct combat operations in the winter in the forest, moved well on skis, and were dressed in white camouflage robes.

Soviet troops started with 45 divisions with 810,000 men; total participated in the campaign | million 200 thousand military personnel, 1500 tanks and 3000 aircraft. The operation was entrusted to the Meretskov Leningrad Military District without being converted into a front. The beginning was disastrous. Due to the recent cutting down of military personnel, the level of command was below any criticism. Tactically, the Soviet units did not know how to operate in the forest area, they were trained to fight in open spaces. In the snow-covered forest, the Red Army soldiers in dark overcoats were excellent targets for the Finns, especially for their snipers. Fin-

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We have shown a lot of ingenuity. When fighting a superior enemy, they often resorted to unconventional methods, such as attacking field kitchens, so important for survival in winter conditions, and Red Army soldiers warming themselves by fires.

The war brought popularity to Molotov. As soon as he announced on the radio that Soviet air raids on cities were carried out in order to deliver food to the starving population of Finland, the Finns began to call the bombs falling on them "Molotov bread baskets". Soon they began to attack Soviet tanks with Molotov cocktails, which went down in history as the "Molotov cocktail".

Often, Soviet units sent to help the encircled troops were themselves surrounded. This happened to the 34th tank brigade, which went to the aid of the 18th rifle division. After being encircled for 54 days, the brigade was almost completely destroyed (see Eiskosop, Zaipetaa, pp. [3-14]).

In December, the 44th Rifle Division (25 thousand people), which was going to the rescue of the 163rd Division, ran into a Finnish detachment of 300 people sitting in an ambush. Parts of the division, stretching for 7-8 km, were literally cut into pieces by mobile groups of Finns and almost completely destroyed. Losses amounted to 23 thousand people, 43 tanks, 100 guns, 260 trucks, 170 horses and much more. The Finns lost 800 men. When the division commander Vinogradov and his two senior officers got to their own, they were court martialed and immediately shot for the loss of 55 field kitchens.

At the end of the year, it became clear that the breakthrough of the Mannerheim defensive line had failed. Reorganization followed, the North-Western Front was created, headed by Timoshenko. Lessons were learned from the December setbacks. The arriving divisions were not thrown into battle immediately, they were allowed to acclimatize. Massed infantry attacks, which provided easy prey for the Finnish machine gunners, ceased. Artillery, instead of firing at areas, was now supposed to suppress enemy firing points. The destructive power and concentration of fire were monstrous: often jelly

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concrete forts literally burst out of the ground. A lot of new equipment arrived at the front: KV tanks, rifles of the 1939 model, electric excavators and much more. Armored sleighs made at the Kirov factory appeared. Designed for a rifle squad, they were attached to a T-26 or T-28 tank and towed to the first enemy trench. According to the state, eight armored vehicles were supposed to per tank regiment. A total of 250 such machines were manufactured.

In February, Timoshenko launched a decisive offensive in the Vipuri region. The 28th Rifle Corps was given the task of seizing a bridgehead on the northwestern coast. Infantry, tanks and armored sledges were on the ice, being bombed by not numerous Finnish aircraft. Soviet troops were often in an unenviable position, but the Finns could not stop them. In the end, the Finnish defense on the Karelian Isthmus was completely destroyed. On March 5, Finland asked for a truce, but the Soviet side rejected this proposal. On March 7, a Finnish delegation arrived in Moscow. The peace treaty was signed on March 12, hostilities ceased the next day.

Under the treaty, the USSR received the Karelian Isthmus, Vyborg, Sortavala, islands in the Gulf of Finland, a piece of Finnish territory with the city of Kuolajärvi, part of the Rybachy and Sredny peninsulas, as well as a lease on part of the Hanko Peninsula for a period of 30 years to equip a naval base there. Lake Ladoga now turned out to be completely within the borders of the USSR; the polar region of Petsamo with nickel deposits was returned to Finland.

The Finns lost 22,830 killed, a significant loss for a small country. Soviet losses were, without exaggeration, grandiose: total - 391 thousand 738 people, irretrievable (killed and died from wounds) - 126 thousand 875 people, sanitary - 264 thousand 908 people, including 17 thousand 867 frostbitten. The Red Army also lost about 1,000 tanks (almost all from Molotov cocktails) and 800 aircraft.

The actions of the Red Army made an extremely unfavorable impression in the world. Hitler's opinion was: "a colossus with feet of clay without a head."

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SUMMARIZING

On April 14, a month after the end of the Finnish war, the Kremlin gathered in an expanded format the Main Military Council. Officially, this was called the CONFERENCE OF THE OFFICIAL STAFF OF THE CC AUCP(b) TO COLLECT EXPERIENCE IN COMBAT ACTIONS AGAINST FINLAND. They sat for four days under the chairmanship of Voroshilov and Kulik in the presence of Stalin, who took an active part in the discussion. Through the habitual mask of a wise, demanding and kind father of the people, the traits of an intriguer and provocateur sometimes showed through. Here is a good example. The head of the Political Department, Mekhlis, complained that he could not remove the editor of Krasnaya Zvezda, who did not work well. In response, Stalin made a few general remarks about what a military newspaper should be, then asked to whom it belonged. Mekhlis replied that the People's Commissariat of Defense, after which Stalin remarked:

"This is very good. If the newspaper were of the Political Directorate, it would have shot all the commanders, leaving only the laborers (laughter)."

The Red Army was well aware of the terrible track record of Mekhlis during the repressions, but the chief political commissar was just Stalin's tool, his henchman. With his remark, the leader is clearly trying to create the impression that the excesses of terror are the fault of overzealous switchmen like Mekhlis, who, however, remained at his post. It is difficult to say whether Stalin regretted that in 1937-1938, thousands of qualified military commanders and professionals were destroyed on his orders. Now we had to reap the bitter fruits of the hysterical purge.

The Finnish campaign was the first war under the supreme leadership of Stalin, during the civil war Trotsky and Lenin were the main bosses. The results were disappointing. Khrushchev gives this assessment:

“Stalin literally lost his temper, he realized as a result of the war with Finland that our army is weak, that our command staff is weak and that we are weak in weapons. After the war with Finland, Stalin literally trembled before Hitler, he apparently

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came to the conclusion that our army could not resist the Nazi army.

This was written many decades after the events, but, apparently, somehow reflects direct impressions.

Formally, the meetings were supposed to reveal the causes of the catastrophic miscalculations in the Finnish war, but they took place in an atmosphere of hallelujah, which made serious discussion impossible. The outcome of the Finnish war was officially presented as an outstanding achievement. The winners of tiny Finland, who ditched the abyss of their troops, were showered with awards. Commander of the North-Western Front Timoshenko and Commander-7 Meretskov were awarded the title of Heroes. 12 rifle divisions and 9 tank brigades of the 7th Army were awarded the Orders of Lenin and the Red Banner.

After that, the maximum that could be counted on was to find those responsible for the initial failures. There were seven meetings in four days. Campaigners spoke out against them one after another, mostly complaining and making excuses. Of course, shortcomings in the training, equipping and supply of the troops came to the surface, but the conversation was superficial, and there was no guarantee that these flaws would be eliminated. Instead of a constructive discussion, at best, they received criticism, which is typical for party meetings. Stalin and Voroshilov often asked questions or made remarks. The tone of both was bossy, lordly. Both often revealed their military naivete or illiteracy. However, in the spirit of those years, no one noticed this, or at least did not show it. In his closing speech, Stalin first of all declared:

“It was impossible to do without war. The war was necessary, since peace negotiations with Finland did not yield results, and the security of Leningrad had to be ensured unconditionally. For his security is the security of our Fatherland.”

_ Knowing that the question of the expediency of the "winter war" was on everyone's mind, Stalin resolved it by issuing a political directive, with which hardly anyone would argue:

“The party and the government acted quite correctly in not postponing this matter, and knowing that we were not yet fully prepared for war in Finnish conditions, active military

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actions at the end of November, at the beginning of December. ... in the West, the three largest powers grabbed each other by the throat... It would be great stupidity, political short-sightedness to miss the moment and not try as soon as possible, while there is a war in the West, to raise and resolve the issue of security Leningrad”.

Further, Stalin actually justified the entire course of the campaign, which, if necessary, according to him, could turn into a war against all of Europe. From this followed an implicit conclusion about the correctness of the strategy, the losses were not mentioned at all, the conclusion was bravura:

“We defeated not only the Finns - this task is not so big. The main thing in our victory is that we defeated the technique, tactics and strategy of the advanced states of Europe, whose representatives were teachers of the Finns. This is our main victory.” (Stormy applause, everyone stands up, shouts of “Hurrah!” Shouts of “Hurray for Comrade Stalin!” The participants in the conference give a stormy ovation in honor of Comrade Stalin.)

At the meeting, they said that not everything in this war was good and acceptable, but in passing, without getting to the true causes. Stalin and his henchmen knew about the failures of the first months. They also understood that, despite the storm of applause, many in the military environment viewed the outcome of the war as a Pyrrhic victory. It was necessary to take action. The Red Army expected serious changes.

SHELL IN THE RKKA

The first victim was Voroshilov. He served as people's commissar since 1925, but for purely political reasons - during the Civil War, he did not get laurels. The then People's Commissariat of War Trotsky considered Voroshilov a complete nonentity, his only merit was cooperation with Stalin in Tsaritsyn and Poland. In the 1920s, Voroshilov was criticized face to face and behind his back. In the 1930s, open controversy became impossible, but the People's Commissar's authority did not increase. Although it was not known to the general public, Voroshilov was for a long time in the shadow of Tukhachevsky and other military figures. They tolerated him as a member of the Politburo and Stalinist

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his protege, but they arranged a lot in their own way. So, Voroshilov was an opponent of mechanized corps, but he could not prevent their creation.

It is difficult to say why Stalin first held a large meeting of the commanding staff in April, and dismissed Voroshilov three weeks later. It is possible that he hesitated whom to appoint. The fact that Kulik chaired these meetings interspersed with Voroshilov can be seen as a sign that he was a possible candidate at the time. In any case, Kulik was made marshal on May 7, at the same time as Timoshenko and Shaposhnikov.

In May 1940, Timoshenko was summoned to a meeting of the Politburo, where Stalin literally stunned him:

"The war with the Finns showed weakness in the training of senior command personnel and a sharp decline in discipline in the troops. All this happened under Comrade Voroshilov. And now it will be difficult for him to rectify these major issues in a short time. And time is running out for us: Hitler unleashed a war in Europe. The Politburo decided to replace Comrade Voroshilov with another person and stopped at you."

Timoshenko tried to refuse. He talked about the merits and virtues of Voroshilov and the people's love for him, that he himself did not have state wisdom and experience, but Stalin had already made a decision:

"But the people do not know that Comrade Voroshilov lacks firmness. And now firmness is especially needed in everything. You have it. Take first of all the discipline and training of personnel. As for statesmanship, this will come with time. [Where you need - we will help you.]"

The leader's instructions to the new people's commissar of defense were unequivocal: it was necessary to put things in order. On May 7, the appointment was announced publicly. Voroshilov received in return the ceremonial posts of Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and Chairman of the Defense Committee under the Council of People's Commissars.

Timoshenko, unlike Voroshilov, had twenty years of experience in commanding troops, but did not suffer from intelligence: education was limited to accelerated courses. According to many, he was a primitive martinet. Once in the People's Commissar's chair, Timoshenko did not disappoint his friends.

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well-wishers. From the first day, he began to tirelessly tighten the screws: he tightened the regime in guardhouses, planted disciplinary battalions, demanded that any soldier who was in unauthorized absence for more than 6 hours be considered a deserter (in the Criminal Code it was 6 days) . Repressions in the Red Army reached new heights. In 1939, 112 servicemen were shot for various crimes, in 1940 - 528. During the same time, the number of prison sentences increased from 2,283 to 12,000, with 7,733 Red Army soldiers and commanders receiving sentences of five years or more (see Chezheuu, p. 494).

In an effort to correct the mistakes of the Finnish war in one fell swoop, Timoshenko ordered that the participants in the winter camps of 1940/41 spend the night in tents, as a result, many Red Army soldiers ended up in hospitals with pneumonia. In one of his first orders, the people's commissar announced:

"To teach the troops only what is needed in the war, and only in the way that is done in the war."

In matters of strategy and armaments, the competence of the new people's commissar left much to be desired. Many of his closest associates were even worse. For example, G.I. Sandpiper. It was a fanfaron and an ignoramus of a rare caliber, one had to look for such in the Red Army. Stalin and Voroshilov knew him from Tsaritsyn, where Kulik commanded artillery. Along with personal courage (five wounds in the Civil War), Kulik was distinguished by outstanding ignorance and naivety. He objected to mechanization, objected to minefields - "weapons of the weak", against machine guns - "gangster weapons", when designing new guns he demanded that they be "beautiful", insisted that the 107-mm gun of the times The Civil War put on a tank, and much more of the same kind. Kulik's fate developed bizarrely and ended tragically: during the war he was twice demoted to major general, and in 1950 he was shot, apparently for disrespectful comments about Stalin in table conversations. Much in his biography remains unclear, in particular, the reasons for his strange rise, and also why Stalin tolerated his incompetence and embezzlement for so long.

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For our purposes, it is enough to note that during his leadership of artillery, Kulik broke a lot of wood, caused serious damage to the combat readiness of the Red Army.

Simultaneously with the appointment of Timoshenko as People's Commissar, the ranks of generals and admirals, abolished by the revolution, were introduced in the Red Army. This reform was prepared under Voroshilov. Division commanders, commanders and commanders became generals of various ranks. At the same time, 4,000 commanders were released from places of detention; among them was Rokossovsky. This move was most likely prompted by the heavy losses in the Finnish war.

Timoshenko's reforms followed one after another. One of them was the introduction of the principle of unity of command in the Red Army - the commissars were made deputy commanders for political affairs. It was another zigzag. The institution of commissars was either introduced or liquidated. Before that, in 1937, it was revived. Now, in 1940, the commanders were to some extent freed from the guardianship of political workers, but only at the tactical level. At the operational level—military districts, navies, main military institutions—supervisory military councils have been preserved. Polituprav-. The division of the Red Army was renamed the Main Directorate of Political Propaganda with curtailed rights. At the same time, Timoshenko got rid of Mekhlis, who was close to Stalin, and was replaced by a less influential Zaporozhets. The change was cosmetic and temporary. Mekhlis, who became People's Commissar for State Control, returned to the Red Army with the outbreak of war.

Then Shaposhnikov was removed from the General Staff. Most likely, this was done at the insistence of the people's commissar, who was supposed to be irritated by the pedantic, learned and courteous former colonel of the tsarist army. Meretskov was put in his place, not burdened by education and staff work experience. True, he himself tried to object, but he was told, in the spirit of those years, "it is necessary." Most likely, Meretskov suited Timoshenko as his recent subordinate in the Finnish war. Stalin appreciated Shaposhnikov, but went towards the people's commissar. Shaposhnikov was given a position of the same caliber - deputy commissar for fortifications. Stalin explained to him that the relocation was necessary to calm public opinion: after a not entirely successful war, the people's commissar was replaced, it was inconvenient to leave the chief of staff. The General Staff, which suffered during the purges, lost its qualification

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a fixed, albeit old-fashioned, leader. Shaposhnikov will return a year later, but in the critical interval, because it includes the eve and the beginning of the war, the institution was headed by the weak Meretskov, followed by the even less competent Zhukov.

FRENCH SURPRISE

At first, the war between Germany and the Anglo-French coalition, although it was declared, was not actually waged. The term "strange war", which has become established in the Russian-language literature, does not fully reflect the essence of the phenomenon; the English expression *ryopu shag* - "fake war" - is more precise.

In 1940, events moved faster. Hitler, after several delays, approved the spring attack on France. Even earlier, in April, German troops invaded Denmark and Norway. Denmark fell quickly, the Norwegians resisted for about two months, but [on June 0 they asked for peace. Allied troops attempted to help them, but they were soon withdrawn, because on May 10 the campaign in France began.

It turned out to be a triumph for the German army, which many - in Germany and abroad - took as proof of Hitler's strategic genius. History has shown that this was a hasty exaggeration, although his personal contribution to this victory cannot be denied. The original plan of operation, the "Yellow Plan" developed by the OKH, was predictable - an invasion through Belgium and Holland. The final version, approved by the Fuhrer, included the main attack through the difficult Ardennes. This was Manstein's idea, which the OKH rejected.

The attack of Army Group B under the command of von Bock on Belgium and Holland was perceived by the French as the main one, and the Germans tried to keep them longer in this delusion. In fact, the main attack was assigned to Army Group A von Rundstedt, while Army Group Z von Leeb stood in front of the Maginot Line, where the 41st French division was stationed, while there were 39 divisions on the rest of the front. Holland ceased resistance [May 5, Belgium - 27th.

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Rundstedt's troops, most saturated with armored and motorized formations, moved through the Ardennes forest to Sedan and across the river. Meuse. Then, contrary to expectations, they did not go south to Paris, but at full speed west and north to Calais and the coast of the North Sea. This sickle-like movement cut off the French and English troops who were hastening north against von Bock. And although the British were able to evacuate 220 thousand of their troops and 120 thousand French by June 4 from Dunkirk, the outcome of the war was not in doubt. After a slight hitch, Rundstedt turned south. [June 4, the Germans entered Paris, three days later Petain ordered his troops to stop resisting.

The French army of 800,000 was quickly defeated by old-fashioned strategy and bad command. Its armament, in particular tanks and planes, was practically not inferior to the German one, but the French generals stood with two legs in the past. They did not understand the role of tanks, placed all their hopes on the fortification lines and did not draw any conclusions from the campaign in Poland. Their rejection of modernity went so far that most of the commanders, distrustful of the telephone and radio, kept in touch with the help of messengers on motorcycles.

FURTHER STALIN CONQUERIES

For the Kremlin, the outcome of the French campaign was a complete surprise. They expected that Germany, England and France would be involved in a long conflict - for several years, judging by the experience of the world war. Molotov hurried to send Hitler his warmest congratulations on the outstanding victory of German weapons, but it was a surprise, and by no means a pleasant one. Stalin, far from understanding the military situation, at first preoccupied himself with the political consequences.

In October 1939, he planned a gradual, creeping takeover of the Baltic countries. He then said to Dimitrov:

"We will not seek their Sovietization... The time will come when they will do it themselves."

After the German blitzkrieg in France, the leader decided to hurry up. In mid-June, the Baltic countries will

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issued ultimatums that they could not resist. On June 17, Eremenko's 6th Cavalry Corps entered Lithuania, the LVO troops occupied Latvia and Estonia. On June 26, a Soviet ultimatum to Romania followed, demanding that Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina be ceded. The Germans had to put pressure on Bucharest: they feared that the USSR would occupy all of Romania with its oil.

The speed of the defeat of the French army threw many leaders of the Red Army into confusion. Dmitry Pavlov, head of the Armored Directorate, returned from Spain in 1937 and convinced Stalin that large tank formations were of no practical use. In the summer of 1940, in the face of the stunning successes of Guderian and other tank innovators in France, he reversed (EJKon, S4anpetaa, p. 26). Stalin, feeling that something was wrong, although not fully understanding the essence of the problem, decided - once again - to turn the steering wheel 180 degrees.

Until recently, the Red Army had four tank corps, each consisting of 2 tank and | motorized brigade, about 500 tanks in total. In the summer of 1939, a commission worked on the organizational structure of the ground forces. Shaposhnikov, Kulik, and Voroshilov believed that the tank corps should be disbanded: they are bulky and difficult to manage; other members of the commission—Budyonny, Timoshenko, M.V. Zakharov and others - stood for their preservation. We agreed on a half-hearted decision: to keep the hulls by changing their structure. Soon the Polish campaign took place, where the corps showed themselves not from the best side. Due to poor training and lack of communication, they moved extremely slowly, lagging behind the cavalry divisions. Brigade commander Fedorenko, who soon became the head of the Main Armored Directorate, said:

"The actions of the tank corps showed the difficulty of control, its cumbersomeness; separate tank brigades acted better and more mobile. The tank corps must be disbanded and have separate tank brigades."

Some tank corps commanders spoke in the same spirit. On November 21, 1939, the Main Military Council decided to disband the tank corps, creating tank brigades of the RGK and mechanized divisions instead. Only six months had passed, and under the impression of the war in France, which,

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By the way, it was still going on, on June 9, 1940, the People's Commissariat of Defense decided to create 9 mechanized corps, and what more! Each was to have two armored and one motorized divisions, a motorcycle regiment and other units, a total of 1031 tanks, including 546 KV IT-34.

In the spring of 1941, another 20 corps were ordered to be formed. Stalin, Timoshenko and Zhukov did not have time to do arithmetic. To create 29 corps, about 30 thousand tanks were required, including almost 16 thousand KV and T-34. Meanwhile, Soviet industry was able to produce less than 2,000 such machines by the start of the war.

HITLER'S DECISION TO GO EAST

In the summer of 1940 [Hitler's] popularity reached its apogee. Enthusiastic crowds of Germans showered him with flowers and gave him a standing ovation. In their eyes, he was the greatest figure in the history of Germany. The Fuhrer's position became invulnerable. This was forced to admit even the enemies of the regime. Here is what the conductor Viktor Klemperer wrote in his diary at that time (quoted from: Seyaeuu, p. 382):

"People are confident in his victory over the English and the destruction of London, they expect peace within a few weeks."

Confident as never before in his happy planid, the Fuhrer ordered Brauchitsch to start developing a plan of attack on the USSR. Halder's diary contains the following entry dated July 22 (vol. 2, pp. 86-88):

"... Stalin is flirting with England in order to force her to continue the war and thereby tie us down in order to have time to seize what he wants to seize, but will not be able to if peace comes. He wants to ensure that Germany does not become too strong. However, there are no signs of active action by Russia against us.

The Russian problem will be solved by an offensive. You should consider a plan for the upcoming operation.

A. The rollout will last four to six weeks. The Fuhrer was informed.

B. Defeat the Russian land army, or at least occupy such territory so that Ber can be secured

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lin and the Silesian industrial region from Russian air raids. It is desirable to advance deep into Russia so that our aviation can destroy its most important centers.

B. Political goals: Ukrainian state, federation of the Baltic states, Belarus, Finland. Baltic States —
thorn in the body.

D. 80-100 divisions are needed. Russia has 50-75 good divisions.

If we attack Russia this autumn, England will get relief (air). America will supply England and Russia".

I'm not going to discuss why Hitler made this decision - it would take us too far. The Fuhrer has always been opponents of Bolshevism and Marxism, considering it a Jewish infection. This did not prevent him from making a pact with the Kremlin, but his hands were not tied. One has only to note his hypertrophied self-confidence. Speer was present during Hitler's conversation with Keitel and Jodl when the Fuehrer declared (cited in aejaeu, p. 382):

"Now we have shown what we are capable of. Trust me, Keitel, the campaign against Russia will look like child's play in the sandbox by comparison.

In early August, Poland began to be prepared as a springboard for an attack on the USSR: the necessary railroads were laid there. lines and roads, built airfields and barracks. 10 infantry and 2 tank divisions were moved to the east. Halder and the General Staff at that time did not have reliable information about the enemy's forces. The military attache in Moscow, General Kestring, warned against underestimating the Soviet forces, despite their failures in Finland. It doesn't seem to be taken seriously.

The development of the plan for the Russian campaign (originally called "Plan Otto") was entrusted by Halder to the chief of staff of the 18th Army, Major General Marx, who was considered an expert on Russia. He acted quickly. Having received the order to begin planning for the war in the east on July 19, he submitted his proposals to Halder on August 5. The goal is to defeat the enemy forces in the western part of the USSR, preventing them from going deep into the country, and to seize Soviet territory up to the line of the Northern Dvina - Middle Volga - lower reaches of the Don, in other words, Arkhangelsk - Gorky - Rostov. Choosing this

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line was due to the consideration to secure Germany from the bombing of Soviet aircraft. This shows that the Germans had a greatly exaggerated idea of its capabilities.

In discussing the goals of the campaign, Marx paid much attention to the political and economic significance of Moscow, Ukraine, Donbass, and Leningrad. Hitler later picked up these arguments, they were included in the final directive - to the detriment of the goals

higher caliber, such as the destruction of military power and the seizure of territory. At the same time, an erroneous idea was born that the USSR would cling to the Baltic republics, which allegedly posed a serious threat to the left flank of the German movement towards Moscow.

The attitude of the Chief of the General Staff to the Russian campaign was ambivalent. On the one hand, he believed that he would be able to defeat the Soviet Union, at least its troops on the western border, on the other hand, he was wary of a war on two fronts.

In addition to Halder, Brauchitsch, Jodl, and Runstedt spoke out against the war at various times. According to the latter ([4944e] Nap, Segtap Sepega[5, p. 171]):

"Hitler insisted that we must strike before Russia became too strong; at the same time, he argued that she herself is much closer to the attack than we imagine. He provided us with information that Russia was planning an offensive in the summer [94 | d. I doubted it, and when we crossed the border I found very little trace of it.

..everything looked like the Russians were taken by surprise. On my front, we did not find any signs of preparation for the offensive in the forward positions, although something could be seen in the depths. In the Carpathian sector they have 25 divisions at the Hungarian frontier and I expected them to turn around and attack my right flank as I advanced. Instead they simply retreated. From this, I concluded that they were not in a state of combat readiness for the offensive and that the Russian command had no intention of launching an offensive earlier.

From November 28 to December 3, Lieutenant General Paulus, Chief of Operations and Deputy Chief of Staff, held staff games to assess the possibilities of the eastern campaign. It was attended by the future chiefs of staff

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army groups. According to the results of the games, the attackers, the "blues", had enough strength and resources to reach the Leningrad-Smolensk-Dnepr line. The conclusion was that after that the operation could be continued only if the supply problem was successfully solved. [Army Quartermaster General Wagner, regardless of the General Staff, came to a similar conclusion. In his opinion, difficulties with transport will lead to a halt in the offensive after the capture of Minsk. Wagner believed that it was desperately necessary to inflict a decisive defeat on the Red Army before it left the Dnieper. Otherwise, the density of the German forces, opening up in the form of a fan, will not be sufficient to defeat the Russians (More, pp. 72-73).

Without waiting for a full assessment of the results of the games, the command of the ground forces (OKH) on December 5 familiarized the Fuhrer with the campaign plan. The eastern front was divided into two parts according to geographic conditions - to the north and south of the Pripyat marshes (other names: Pinsk marshes, or Polesie). Two army groups will operate in the northern segment, aimed at Leningrad, Smolensk and Minsk. The southern group of troops will go to Kyiv and Ukraine. According to Halder, the Soviet troops could be forced into battle before they retreated beyond the Dnieper. Hitler, haunted by the ghosts of Charles HP and Napoleon, insisted from the outset that the Red Army should not be allowed to withdraw into the interior of the country.

Brauchitsch expressed timid doubt that the Luftwaffe would be able to act both against England and against the USSR. To this, Hitler caustically remarked that it was capable of waging a war on two fronts - provided that the campaign against the USSR was completed quickly. Halder emphasized that the main target of the campaign was Moscow, so the flanks of Army Group Center must have enough tanks to repel, if necessary, any attacks from the Ukraine or the Baltic. Hitler did not agree. Moscow is of little value, he said. The main thing is to secure the territory [of Germany. At the same time, it is necessary to remember about economic goals. Therefore, the tank formations of the Center group should be ready, if necessary, to turn to Ukraine or the Baltic states. Brauchitsch tried to emphasize the paramount importance for the Russians of the old Smolensk road to Moscow, to which the Fuhrer

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he argued that such an idea could only come from ossified brains. It was decided that Army Group Center would only plan to reach the isthmus of Orsha-Smolensk, after which the Fuhrer would decide on further steps. Thus, the Bar Barossa plan included an installation that became one of the main reasons for the failure of the campaign 194 | G.

The second phase of the games led by Paulus took place from 17 to 20 December. An attempt was made to solve two fundamental questions: 1) how to link the movement of mechanized formations and marching infantry due to their different speeds; 2) how to supply three to three and a half million troops deep inside the USSR Paulus and the participants in the game entered uncharted territory: never before had the General Staff dealt with strategy and tactics over such a vast geographical area. The conclusions were not optimistic: the forces of the Wehrmacht are barely sufficient for the goals set. The army will be left without reserves by the time it reaches Moscow, the city will have to be taken with the same forces - there will be no reinforcements. Another conclusion was that reaching the Volga-Arkhangelsk line was beyond the capabilities of the Wehrmacht.

Since the campaign was predetermined to be short, the participants in the game were forced to forego serious interaction between tanks and infantry. Tank formations will advance independently, leaving the task of liquidating the cut off enemy troops to the infantry. At the same time, the guards of the rapidly moving tank columns hung in the air.

Another disappointing conclusion concerned the supply. The distance from the border to Smolensk was 700 km, to Moscow - more than 1000. The games showed that the existing warehouses would ensure advancement only to the Dnieper-Dvina line. Even if it were possible to build new warehouses, they would be limited by the Soviet railway - with a different gauge and mostly single-track. It had to be shifted, and possibly restored, if the retreating Red Army had time to destroy it. In short, the plan reported to Hitler on December was unrealistic. Halder and Brauchitsch did their best to ignore this.

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MOLOTOV IN BERLIN

At the end of the summer of 1940, without waiting for the completion of work on the Otto plan, the German [General Staff] determined a new scheme for deploying ground forces: 120 divisions were intended for the invasion of the USSR, 50 remained in France, 7 - in Norway and 5 in Holland. In September, a German tank division arrived in Romania.

Despite these preparations, the USSR and Germany outwardly remained friends and partners. In the summer and autumn, tensions were revealed in their relations. The Kremlin was worried about the too rapid fall of France, the Germans did not like the excessive activity of the USSR in Romania and in the Balkans in general, as well as the threat of a new war against Finland. Hitler decided to develop a plan of attack on the USSR, but did not give up the idea of cooperation. At a meeting with Mussolini on October 28, he stated (see G. apdeg, p. 136):

"My distrust of Stalin is the same as his distrust of me. "However, he immediately added: "If the Axis countries reach an understanding with Russia, the front will stretch from Japan to Spain."

In the directive for the military of November 12 (the day Molotov arrived in Berlin), the Fuhrer was more categorical:

"Political consultations are beginning to ascertain Russia's intentions. Regardless of the outcome of these discussions, the verbally prescribed preparations for war in the east will continue."

Less is known about Stalin's intentions and thoughts. There is, however, one piece of evidence worth noting. On November 7, 1940, the Kremlin elite celebrated the anniversary of the October Revolution. Dinner began at 5.30, at 9 pm, after numerous toasts and libations, the guests were about to leave, when Stalin unexpectedly took the floor. Dimitrov later recorded this speech from memory in his diary (quoted from Ceļā{euy, p. 402):

"History has spoiled us. We have achieved many successes relatively easily. This has led many of us to become self-satisfied, a dangerous self-satisfaction... We have many honest and courageous people, but they have forgotten that one

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courage is not enough: you also need knowledge and skill ... You need to constantly learn and relearn every couple of years. No one wants to learn from us. People do not want to learn the lessons of the war with Finland, the war in Europe... We are not ready for the war that is now going on between Germany and England. It turned out that our planes could only stay in the air for thirty-five minutes, while the German and British ones could stay in the air for several hours. If in the future our armed forces, our transport, etc. will not be equal to the strength of our enemies (these enemies are all capitalist countries, including those that dress up as our friends), then they will swallow us up. Only with equality of material forces will we win, because the people support us, the people are on our side ...

Look at me. I am able to study, read, be aware every day, why can't you? You do not like to study, you are happy to remain the way you are. You are squandering Lenin's legacy."

Those present left in silence, some with tears in their eyes. So, at least, Dimitrov wrote. Stalin was a master of such demagogic sermons. Of course, everyone except him was to blame for the unpreparedness of the Red Army, if only we forget about his ingenious, tireless and obsessive leadership.

Impressed by this memorable dinner, Molotov arrived in Berlin on November 12. He was accompanied by a delegation of 65 people: People's Commissar for Ferrous Metallurgy Tevosyan, five deputy people's commissars, employees of the NKID and the NKVD.

The schedule of the visit was very busy. As Langer and Gleason write (p. 137):

"With the exception of the time allotted for the inevitable protocol breakfasts and dinners, the two days of the visit consisted of practically continuous meetings that dragged on until late at night. It can be said that if Molotov did not lock himself with Ribbentrop, then he conferred with Hitler.

Ribbentrop received Molotov and Dekanozov an hour after their arrival, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon a conversation with Hitler took place in the imperial chancellery. In the evening, the Germans held a reception at the Kaiserhof Hotel (Hitler was not present). The next day, on the 13th, Molotov met with Goering and Hess in the morning, and again with Hitler at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. First there was breakfast, then

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seda with the participation of Ribbentrop. At 7 o'clock Molotov gave a return dinner at the embassy. The reception was interrupted by an air raid - this was the first British air raid on Berlin. Molotov and Ribbentrop had to go down. in a bomb shelter, where they talked until midnight. You can often find a description of the dialogue that took place at this time. The People's Commissar could not resist the temptation to insert a hairpin to his German colleague. If, as you say, the British Empire is on its last legs, he asked sarcastically, who are we hiding from in this basement? The only trouble is that the source of information about this conversation was none other than Stalin during Churchill's visit to Moscow in August 1942 (G.Kasz, p. 30). For this reason, it is not easy to believe in the authenticity of this episode.

On the morning of November 14, Molotov left Berlin. On the same day, a massive German air raid wiped out the British city of Coventry; the British did not forget and responded a few years later with the destruction of Dresden.

Negotiations were difficult and ended inconclusively, they are sometimes characterized as a "dialogue of the deaf". Everyone bent his own line, not paying attention to the arguments of the interlocutor. Molotov arrived in Berlin with detailed instructions from Stalin (see Bezymensky, ch. 20). The main purpose of the trip was to find out the real goals of the Anti-Comintern Pact and to outline the sphere of interests of the USSR in Europe and Asia. Stalin wanted to test the possibility of an agreement with [Germany, as well as with Italy, but at the same time not to conclude any agreements, meaning the continuation of these negotiations in Moscow, where Ribbentrop was to arrive in the near future. More specific provisions applied to Finland, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and

Iran. The Kremlin had far-reaching plans for these countries. He wanted to bring Soviet troops into Bulgaria (the Germans did this in Romania) and, of course, access to the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles.

Hitler wanted to direct the appetites of the USSR to the division of the British Empire, but it was difficult to knock Molotov out of his position. His professorial tone and manner irritated the Fuehrer. Hitler, what a minister, campaigned with might and main, but the listener remained as cold as ice. The only bright spot was Molotov's hint that the USSR was ready to join the Trilateral Pact - on conditions that would be

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formulated later. On November 25, they were set out in a memorandum handed over to Ambassador Schulenburg (1941, book 1):

"The USSR basically agrees to accept the draft pact of the four powers on their political cooperation and mutual economic assistance, outlined by Mr. Ribbentrop in his conversation with V.M. Molotov in Berlin on November 13, 1940 and consisting of 4 points, under the following conditions:

1. If the German troops are immediately withdrawn from Finland, which represents the sphere of influence of the USSR in accordance with the Soviet-German agreement of 1939, and the USSR undertakes to ensure peaceful relations with Finland, as well as the economic interests of [Germany in Finland (export of timber, nickel).
2. If in the coming months the security of the USSR in the Straits is ensured by concluding a pact of mutual assistance between the USSR and Bulgaria, which, due to its geographical position, is in the sphere of security of the Black Sea borders of the USSR, and the organization of a military and naval base of the USSR in the area Bosphorus and Dardanelles on the basis of a long-term lease.
3. If the center of gravity of the aspiration of the USSR is recognized as the area south of Batum and Baku in the general direction towards the Persian Gulf.
4. If Japan gives up its concession rights for coal and oil in Northern Sakhalin on the terms of fair compensation. In accordance with the foregoing, the draft protocol to the 4-Power Treaty, presented by Mr. Ribbentrop on the delimitation of spheres of influence, should be changed in the spirit of determining the center of gravity of the aspiration of the USSR in the south of Batumi and Baku in the general direction towards the Persian Gulf.

In the same way, the draft protocol outlined by Mr. Ribbentrop—the Agreement between Germany, Italy, the USSR and Turkey—should be changed in the spirit of securing the military and naval base of the USSR near the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles on the basis of

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long-term lease with the guarantee of the 3 powers of the independence and territory of Turkey in the event that Turkey agrees to join the four powers.

This protocol should provide that in the event of Turkey's refusal to join the four powers, Germany, Italy and the USSR agree to work out and implement the necessary military and diplomatic measures, on which a special agreement should be concluded.

Berlin never responded to these terms. It is difficult to say how seriously [Hitler considered joining the USSR to the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo axis. Perhaps the conversation was started as a distraction in an attempt to gain time - the development of a plan for a campaign in the East at that time was in full swing. On the other hand, although this pact was called anti-Comintern by the press, it contained a proviso that it was not directed against the USSR, its main target was America, where Roosevelt increasingly sympathized with Churchill (Hickass, p. 29). It is also possible that the demands of the USSR seemed exorbitant to the Fuhrer.

"% BARBAROSSA"

Draft Directive No. 21 on the Campaign in the East was submitted to Hitler for signature [December 7. The OKH tried to ignore [itler's] remarks, he saw this and changed the text himself. Now it was directly stated there that it was necessary to capture the Baltic republics, as well as Leningrad and Kronstadt, for which the tank formations of the Center group would be sent to the north.

The next day, Hitler signed Directive No. 21. The campaign against the USSR under the new code name "Bar Barossa" was aimed at "achieving a quick and decisive victory over Russia." The invasion was to be carried out, if circumstances so required, even before the end of the struggle with England. The Fuhrer's self-confidence reached its apogee. A war on two fronts was nothing to him now.

The proposal [of the General Staff to form strategic reserves Hitler rejected, he also decided that the invasion forces

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winter uniforms will be needed, since the fighting will end before the onset of cold weather (Coenli2, p. 393). After the triumphs in Poland, France, Norway and Greece, no one could object to him. Moreover, exaggerated optimism now reigned even in the General Staff.

Initially, the operation was scheduled to begin on May 15, 1941. It was assumed that by this time the roads would dry out after the spring thaw. Due to hostilities in the Balkans, the deadline was pushed back by five and a half weeks - to June 22. It seems that even without this, a certain delay was inevitable. Spring was late that year, and the river Bug, in particular, entered its banks only by the beginning of June (Westphal, p. 70).

Strategically, the campaign plan is difficult to recognize as untenable. An offensive along fanning directions could count on success only if the enemy quickly lost the will to resist. At the same time, at the operational level (army groups and armies), German generals demonstrated their superiority: it remained almost until the end of the war - with rare exceptions.

The preparation of the Barbarossa plan was hasty, often superficial. For example, in France, the Germans had 10 tank divisions, in 1941 - 21. However, the doubling was mostly illusory: previously, the core of such a division was a tank brigade consisting of two regiments, a total of 160 vehicles. On the eve of the invasion of the USSR, one regiment was taken from each division, on the basis of which new divisions of a reduced composition were formed (14144e | Nap, H!1\$ south ... p. 157). True, now the division had more medium tanks Mark-Shi Mark-U.

Here are the shortcomings of the plan:

1. Too short preparation for a serious and long war. In fact, a quick campaign was being prepared. All hope for a speedy victory was based on the assumption that an invasion would bring about the fall of the Bolshevik regime.

2. The Wehrmacht had few tanks - only 800 more than in France, although more than average ones.

3. Insufficient intelligence data. The main reason is short time. On German maps of the Soviet territory, many country roads were marked as serious highways. At the same time, the condition of the roads in the newly occupied Polish regions was reflected more or less accurately.

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4. Insufficient human resources. In February 1941, according to Keitel, the Red Army in the west had 155 divisions (actually more), and the German invasion forces had 121 (there were 148 in June). Incidentally, Hitler told Matsuoka on March 31 that he "had 160-180 divisions in case of a collision with the Soviet Union." Perhaps it was bragging, but it cannot be ruled out that the Führer believed in it.

5. Insufficient economic potential of Germany.

This last point caused the most objections, although they were very muted. Brauchitsch, according to Halder's note, said: "Our economic potential is not sufficient for such a task. We must not underestimate the risk in the West." Goering declared at the Nuremberg trials: "It was Hitler who decided so. I thought it was stupidity, because, in my opinion, it was necessary to defeat England first. Shortly before the invasion, staff officers, on Hitler's orders, gave briefings on the Soviet economy. They argued that the USSR was not in a position to produce decent weapons and was not in a position to replenish its losses quickly. After one of these lectures, the head of military intelligence, Admiral Canaris, remarked (Masog\$ M, p. 100):

"Gentlemen, do you really believe in all this? According to experts from my department, the real situation is quite different. Until now, no one has been able to defeat Russia and conquer it.

A rather uncompromising position was taken by the State Secretary of the German Foreign Ministry, Weizsäcker. Here is what is said in his memorandum to Ribbentrop dated April 28, 1941 (see 1939-1941 ... p. 321):

"...I am sure that we will defeat Russia only militarily, but from the point of view of the economy we will lose a lot...

If we do not believe in the imminent collapse of England, it would be wise, while continuing the war with her, to use the Soviet Union as a raw material base.

A German attack on Russia will only serve to strengthen the moral stamina of the British."

After the war, Manstein, speaking about the reasons for the defeat in the East, names the underestimation of the strength of the Soviet state system, the resources of the Soviet Union and the combat capability of the Red Army as the first factor (p. 179).

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Of course, this was not a sin of one Führer. Too many in the high command, Brauchitsch, Halder and Jodl in the first place, shared this delusion, succumbed to the temptation of a lightning campaign of victory. How they came to this conclusion, whether they convinced themselves or believed the assurances of the Führer, is in the final analysis not so important.

The Barbarossa plan was entirely based on tactical surprise and the postulate of the destruction of the Red Army forces in the border areas before they could retreat into the USSR. Everything was scheduled as if it were a parade or an exercise. Army Group "North" surrounds the enemy in the Baltic, after which, together with the Finns, captures Leningrad and the north of European Russia. [The group "Center" destroys the enemy in Belarus, then, after reaching Orsha, it helps two other groups. Army Group "South" quickly breaks through to Kyiv and the Dnieper crossings in order to prevent the retreat of the enemy.

No alternative options were provided in case such a defeat did not succeed completely. At the same time, there was no indication of what to do next. What would happen after Barbarossa, no one knew - with [itler in chapter.

MEETING OF THE HIGHEST COMMAND STRUCTURE OF THE RKKA

In the last days of 1940, Timoshenko gathered in Moscow the leadership of the Red Army. The goal was to demonstrate to Stalin and to ourselves that the reasons for the Finnish failure were comprehended and eliminated and the army was ready for any surprise. The leading staff of the People's Commissariat of Defense and [the General Staff, heads of central departments,

commanders, members of military councils and chiefs of staff of military districts, armies, heads of military academies, general inspectors of military branches, commanders of some corps, divisions - a total of 274 people.

People's Commissar Timoshenko opened it, read the agenda, after which he said:

"Mainly we raise these topics because a lot of people have been prepared with these questions according to the information given to them in advance.

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assignments and we will be able to establish the courage and inquisitiveness with which our Red Army has been enriched and should be rich, for in past years we have had many rogues who tendentiously and with malicious intent confused our good deeds.

Having shown his "knowledge" of the Russian language and his attitude towards the destruction of the personnel of the Red Army, he opened the meeting.

The report of the chief of the General Staff Meretskov "Results and tasks of combat training of the ground forces, air force and operational training of the highest command personnel" was boring, bureaucratic and in many details efficient. Professional General Staff officers probably had a hand in writing it. One can, of course, ask why specific issues of combat training were discussed at the parade meeting of the Areopagus, and not at tactical exercises, but that was the style of that time. The tone of the report in relation to the authorities was, as expected, extremely servile. Meretskov repeatedly praised People's Commissar Timoshenko, the implementation of whose directives would make the Red Army unsurpassed. The ending was predictable:

"Under the leadership of the People's Commissar of Defense, we must rebuild our army as soon as possible, really bring it to high combat readiness, achieve such a position that we can constantly go on a campaign at the request of the government at any time."

Alas, Meretskov's self-abasement did not help him. We still have to talk about it.

In the discussion on the report of the Chief of the General Staff, which occupied the second day of the meeting, 28 people spoke. The next five days were reserved for reports on special issues. The first to speak was the commander of the Kyiv military district, Zhukov. And again it is clear that the report was prepared by specialists, most likely General Staff officers Bagramyan and Ivanov, who sought to summarize the experience of recent operations, including the sensational successes of the Wehrmacht in France. However, when it came down to recommendations, there was a statement that the army, when breaking through the defense, should send infantry forward, which would prepare the conditions for the introduction of large tank formations - a method that during the war would be used by the Red Army everywhere. This provoked objections from Stern, who was Zhukov's chief at Khalkhin Gol:

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"...I do not agree with the opinion of Comrade Zhukov that, as a rule, tank corps should be introduced into the gap after the entire depth of the defense, including the second line of defense, has been breached ... It is clear, that everyone wants to send a fresh and clean tank corps into the breach, but this does not always work out, and most of the time it does not work out. And the Germans used their mechanized corps for a breakthrough and field defense, and in France - in some cases and for a long time - the defense of the northern, weak continuation of the Maginot Line.

Soon Zhukov became higher than Shtern in the army hierarchy and, it seems, he did not forget this criticism. As for the use of tanks in modern warfare, this topic touched him a little. In the spring of 1941, the Intelligence Directorate received from France an extremely valuable document - "Official Report of the French [General Staff on the Franco-German War of 1939-1940." [General Gamelin personally delivered the report to the Soviet military attaché. [The German army was described down to divisions and units: composition, weapons, numbering and grouping. The diagram showed the course of hostilities from the first to the last day of the war. Based on the materials of the French report, the information department of the Intelligence Department, under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Novobranets, prepared a report that was sent to the Chief of the General Staff. Here's what happened next, in the words of the Rookie:

"On our report, clumsily and illiterately, a resolution signed by G.K. Zhukova: "I don't need it. Tell us how many refuelings of fuel were used for one wheeled vehicle.

Head of the Main Directorate of the Air Force Rychagov reported on the actions of aviation in the offensive, Commander of the Moscow Military District Tyulenev - on the nature of the modern defensive operation, Commander of the Western Military District Pavlov - on the use of mechanized formations in the offensive, in introducing them into the breakthrough, Inspector General infantry Smirnov - about the combat operations of the rifle division in the offensive and defense. Without going into technical details, we note one passage in Pavlov's report:

"...our views on the use of tanks turned out to be the most correct and were confirmed by the actions of German tank formations in Poland and in the West. German

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you didn't come up with anything new. They took what we had, improved it a bit and applied it."

This was said by the same Pavlov, on whose recommendation Stalin disbanded the mechanized corps in 1939. Pavlov had to test the validity of his assessment on himself in just about six months.

Summing up the results of the meeting, Timoshenko gleamed with contentment:

"The results of the meeting are huge. They are so huge that it is not even possible to bring them down now completely.

The event was indeed epoch-making: the report of the chief of the General Staff, five special reports, dozens of senior officials spoke in the debate. Enraptured by the results achieved, the people's commissar spoke in poetic language:

"We have found the source of military thought, from which it will rapidly spill over into all the pores of our military organism."

Unfortunately, he did not specify from which part of the body the above-mentioned outpouring would come. There were also other pearls:

"We began to really carry out the instructions of Comrade Stalin on raising the military-ideological level of our command cadres and laid the foundation for the creation of our own military ideology.

The meeting finally laid the foundations for real military psychology in the education of our command cadres. From here they will spread to the fighter.

This will ensure the high moral education of our troops, without which a modern war cannot be waged.

The first part of the final speech bears a clear imprint of Timoshenko's personality and was written, if not by him, then according to his marks. The rest of the sections are composed in a business-like, dry and professional way, which makes one suspect the participation of nameless General Staff officers.

Before the New Year, most of the meeting participants went home. Only the ranks from the army level up remained. They were faced with operational-strategic games on maps.

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THE SHAKING CONTINUES

From January 2 to January 11, operational-strategic games on cards took place in Moscow. People's Commissar Timoshenko led, the highest ranks of the Red Army participated and were present - from the commanders of the armies. On Sunday the 12th, the participants were preparing to leave the capital when an unexpected order came: tomorrow at noon to be in the Kremlin at a meeting [of the Main Military Council with the participation of Stalin and members of the Politburo.

First, the Chief of the General Staff, Meretskov, reported on the past meetings of the senior command staff and the results of the games. Members of the General Staff, headed by Vatutin, prepared a detailed report for him, but Meretskov, perhaps from excitement in the presence of high authorities, spoke confusedly and several times could not give a direct answer to Stalin's questions. In addition, he was given little time. The leader, it seems, was annoyed by the results of the games, where Zhukov won by commanding the "blue", i.e. the Germans. The time allotted for Meretskov's report ran out, after which Vatutin tried to give an explanation, but Stalin did not give him the floor. He walked around the office and after a pause announced (Meretskov, p. 200):

"Comrade Timoshenko asked to appoint Comrade Zhukov as Chief [of the General Staff. Let's agree!"

Naturally, there were no objections. I was also pleased. Five months ago I.V. Stalin, when appointing me to the same post, promised to replace me when he found a suitable candidate. And so he kept his promise. I returned to the post of Deputy People's Commissar of Defense and again plunged into the issues of combat training of the troops.

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If Meretskov was not quite suitable for this position, then Zhukov was in every sense contraindicated. Powerful and poorly educated, he did not know staff work and deeply despised it. Who initiated this appointment is unknown. In any case, the consequences were catastrophic.

The performances began. Head of the Directorate of Armored Forces Ya.N. Fedorenko complained about the lack of modern tanks - T-34 and KV. If the budget does not have additional funds for this, they can be taken from the amounts intended for the production of artillery. Marshal Kulik retorted from his seat: "The artillery will shoot all your tanks. Why produce them? Fedorenko began ardently arguing that the tanks also had cannons...

After that, Kulik took the floor. Starting with artillery protection, he soon moved on to his ideal of an infantry division. According to Kulik, its number should have been increased to 18 thousand, and horse traction, tested by time, should be used as transport. When Stalin began to sum up the results of the meeting, Kulik turned out to be an easy target:

"For several years, the Central Committee of the Party and the government literally "imposed" on the leadership of the People's Commissariat of Defense the idea of the need to create large mechanized and tank formations. But the People's Commissariat of Defense showed some surprising timidity in this regard... Kulik defends a large horse-drawn division of eighteen thousand, he opposes the mechanization of the army. The government is carrying out the mechanization of the army, introducing the engine into the army, and Kulik opposes the engine. It's the same as if he came out against the tractor and combine, defending the plow and the economic backwardness of the countryside. If the government had taken the point of view of Kulik, say, during the years of the collectivization of agriculture, then we would have been left with an individual farm and with a plow.

This was classic Stalin. The arguments about the war of engines sounded convincing and progressive, if we forget that quite recently, on November 1, 1939, at a meeting of the same Main Military Council, it was he who passed the decision to liquidate

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daces of tank corps, created back in 1932. As for Kulik, he was appointed by none other than Stalin. Now, under the impression of the lightning fall of France, where the German tank fists played a decisive role, the leader was in a hurry to relieve himself of responsibility. Something similar happened at the dawn of collectivization. At the end of 1929, Stalin sent thousands of party organizers to drive the peasant into the collective farms, but the following spring, frightened by rumors of fermentation in

Red Army, began to beat the retreat. In the article "Dizzy with Success," he blamed the excesses of collectivization on the very Bolsheviks who carried out his own directives. The peasants began to scatter from the collective farms, but soon they were driven back, because the rumors of rebellions were not confirmed.

TRADE WITH THE AGGRESSOR

Trade with Germany has traditionally played a prominent role in the Russian economy. In the 20s. After a break due to the World War and the Civil War, lively trade relations with the Germans resumed. In 1934-1939. a new decline set in, which ended after the conclusion of the Mikoyan-Schnurre agreement. January 10, 194] followed by a new agreement between the two countries. In January and February, while contracts were being signed, the volume of Soviet deliveries was relatively modest - only 28 million marks, but nevertheless the Germans received 200 thousand tons of Bessarabian grain so valuable to them (see 1939-1941 .. pp. 307). In March, according to the German Foreign Ministry, "deliveries increased rapidly. This is especially true for grain, manganese ore, valuable and precious metals" (ibid.). At the same time, a contract was signed for the supply of 1.4 million tons of grain, which the Germans insisted on. They immediately received [00 thousand tons, with a promise that another 170 to 200 million tons will come in April.

German deliveries in the first quarter were minimal, only to equalize the trade balance between the two countries. The fact is that the USSR owed Germany 31.5 million marks for the "Suwalki ledge", which, according to the Kaunas agreement, from January 10

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rya became Soviet. On this occasion, the two socialist regimes, using the Gestapo and the NKVD, carried out the "resettlement of peoples" in February and March: the Germans were moved from the territory of Lithuania to occupied Poland, while Lithuanians, Russian Old Believers and Belarusians were transported from Lithuania to the Suwayki region. In a month and a half in 1941, 3,773 German families were deported and 11,845 Lithuanians, 8,882 Old Believers and 45 Belarusians were brought in.

The flow of Soviet raw materials, so necessary for the economy of the Third Reich, did not stop until the very beginning of hostilities. From Schnurre's memorandum of May 15 we learn that in April 208 thousand tons of grain, 90 thousand tons of fuel, 8300 tons of cotton and 6340 tons of copper, tin and nickel were delivered. In addition, 4,000 tons of rubber from East Asia were transported through Siberia (1939-1941... p. 328).

At the same time, the Germans were well aware that they would not fulfill their counter-deliveries "due to a lack of manpower and the priority of military programs."

PREPARATION OF THE USSR FOR WAR

The extent to which the Soviet Union was ready for war with Germany is evidenced by the tragic defeats in the summer of 1941. This conclusion has been (and still is) vehemently disputed on the grounds that the five-year plans of the 1930s were primarily aimed at the defense or military industries. In fact, the war-oriented industrialization of the USSR was carried out at a breakneck pace, spending almost half of the gross national product on it, because of which the population was kept on meager, often starvation rations. As is often the case in such discussions, there has been a substitution of the subject of the dispute. In response to the accusation of being unprepared, numerous details were given about how long and hard they had been preparing for the war. Meanwhile, both were true.

The pace at which this preparation proceeded can be seen from the book "1941 - Lessons and Conclusions." - M .: Military Publishing House, 1992. Here the growth of personnel is shown (p. 23-24), deliveries of combat

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equipment (table 2, p. 23), as well as the staffing of mechanized corps (table 3, p. 29):

By January 1939, the Soviet Armed [24] forces had 1943 thousand people, on | | June 1940, their composition was increased to 3602.3 thousand people, and | June 1941 - over 5 million people (Appendix 5).

SUPPLY OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO THE ARMY AND INA FLEET IN 1938-1941

Name Quantity of delivered samples

Kiyunyu military equipment and weapons In [938 | In 1939 | In 1940 1941 2 Total

52600| 73600| 52200 G - 178 400 all systems

5469| 10362| 10565| -5958| 32354

2271 2986 2790 1672 9719

STAFFING OF THE MECHANIZED BODIES OF THE WESTERN BORDER MILITARY DISTRICTS BY THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR

Corps District Number —

- \$left | || 31348] 8] 109 10] 26065 [672 [730] Giza 94

staffing

staffing Including (KViT-34)

PribOVO 672 730

Zap) VO 1131

Personnel Tanks

E E E E © > County Number s o s C? enclosures se e ab = = © 22 = | w = 2 2 > > KOVO (414) 8 171) (136) No. (76) IT] (5) (31) OdVO (60) Total I
_____| (1306)

Note. The number of new tanks (KV and T-34) is indicated in brackets.

Efforts and expenses were enormous, but in this process there were no less gaps and miscalculations.

For example, after the accession to the USSR under the Moloto-Ribbentrop Pact of the western territories, the question arose of 14 fortified regions (URs) of our basic defense system, sometimes called the "Stalin Line". At the suggestion of the marches G.I. Kulik, B.M. Shaposhnikov and A.A. Zhdanov, it was decided to mothball these URs, and in return to build new URs closer to the western border - the "Molotov Line". At the same time, the artillery of the old URs was dismantled for transfer to higher URs. According to the directive of the General Staff of April 8 [941], measures were envisaged to reactivate the old URs on the 10th day after the start of the war, which was not carried out due to the rapid advance of the Germans. In fact, by July 22, it turned out that the new URs were not combat-ready due to the "lack of reliable equipment for structures," and the old ones, in essence, were eliminated.

Yu. Veremeev believes ("The Red Army and the Second World War" - see HEP:

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that the factors that definitely influenced the course and outcome of the battles of the first weeks of the war: poor communications, poor mechanization and improper organization of military formations:

"Radio - the most reliable means of communication - is not used in battle even if other means of communication fail and, as a rule, is inactive (extract from the order of the People's Commissar of Defense No. 0104 of 07/19/1939.)".

"All communication in the Red Army was based on telephone and telegraph wire communication and on couriers (or, as they were called then, "communication delegates"). Well, an exotic form of communication was still preserved - pigeon mail.

"The telephone and telegraph communications of the People's Commissariat of Communications (NCC) in the Baltics (Special Baltic District) was a network left over from the former independent states of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia with all its material part, communication centers and maintenance personnel. In Western Belarus, telephone and telegraph lines and equipment of the former Polish state were used, in the southwestern direction the stationary communication system remained either from the former Poland (Western Ukraine) or from Romania (Bukovina and Bessarabia annexed to the USSR). The communication personnel of these regions, for the most part, did not burn with a special desire to serve the communications of the "Soviet occupiers" in war conditions. They did not feel like Soviet citizens, this war was alien to them. In addition, the Germans tried to infiltrate their agents into the communication system of the Baltic States and the former Poland, which turned out to be not at all difficult to do... Thus, the command and control of troops with the outbreak of hostilities could not but be violated...

How many Red Army soldiers and officers died as a result of the loss of control of the troops, only God knows about that.

"It is quite clearly seen that as of the beginning of 1939, there were practically no vehicles in the troops and no one knows how to organize road transportation. And there is no way to teach it...

I'm not talking about tanks. ... The number of Soviet tanks, according to various estimates, exceeded the number of German tanks by three to four times ...

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The Germans created tank groups, in other words, tank armies. In addition, they put the infantry of the tank divisions on vehicles, and made the artillery of the tank divisions either self-propelled or powered. Even the sapper battalions and rear units of these divisions were motorized. As a result, all parts of the German Panzer Division had mobility approximately equal to tanks. Such an armored fist easily broke through any defense of the Red Army, while the Soviet military leadership failed to correctly assess the role of tank formations and develop tactics for their use before the start of the war.

In Stalin's time, the population was told that comprehensive and truly scientific plans were prepared in case of war, and the failures of the initial period of the war were quickly attributed to the treacherous surprise attack of the Germans. At the same time, they did not explain how the wise and vigilant leaders of the country took the word of the rogue [Hitler] and overlooked the preparations for the largest military operation in history, where more than three million troops moved from the German side to the USSR. It was not supposed to ask questions at that time. At the time of the exposure of the cult, a different view prevailed for some time. Its adherents ardently argued that the Stalinist leadership did not prepare the USSR for war at all. The Party was quick to denounce and stifle such nihilism. A formula was put forward that the preparations were in full swing, but there were some miscalculations due to the erroneous views of I.V. Stalin, which the party promptly corrected.

It turns out that the party did something contrary to Stalin. It would be nice to know what exactly.

It is interesting that from reading military memoirs published in the 60s and 70s, the reader could get a fairly realistic picture of what the General Staff and the People's Commissariat of Defense were doing before the war. It was only necessary to ignore the constant inconsistencies between peppy statements of a general nature and quite truthful, often shocking, details.

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MARSHALS ARE TELLING A LIE

Let's start with Marshal Vasilevsky. This cautious author nevertheless cites many realities of that time. In 1940, the General Staff, under the leadership of Shaposhnikov, developed measures to repel aggression, namely, an operational plan for the deployment of troops, linked to the mobilization plan. It was believed that the main forces of the Germans would be north of Polesye (Pripyat or Pinsk marshes) in the sectors of the North-Western and Western fronts. On October the Chief of the General Staff (it was already Meretskov) reported the plan to Stalin. Here is what Shtemenko says about this (vol. 1, p. 17):

"... I.V. Stalin expressed the opinion that Germany would direct its main efforts not in the western direction, as was written in the plan, but in the southwestern direction, in order first of all to seize the richest industrial, agricultural and raw materials regions of the Soviet Union. The People's Commissar of Defense, who had recently arrived from the southwestern direction, apparently also adhered to this point of view. In any case, neither he nor [the General Staff objected to Stalin's conclusion."

Encouraged by the instructions of the leader, [the headquarters changed the deployment of troops. True, Shtemenko reports:

"...as the events of the Great Patriotic War showed, this forecast turned out to be erroneous. Hitler delivered the main blow in the western direction, and the Soviet command had to correct the miscalculation and concentrate the main forces on the western, Smolensk-Moscow direction. This led to a certain confusion, since some troops had already unloaded not where they subsequently had to fight, and to the loss of precious time.

General Shtemenko, we must give him his due, speaks the language much better than many marshals. The catastrophe in June 1941 he elegantly described as a well-known confusion. He just forgot to give some juicy details. There was a plan, no doubt about it, however, it was very generalized, it gave a bird's-eye view of the measures taken at the level of districts and armies. The Germans brought such plans to the smallest detail, so on the day the war began, the commanders opened

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Do packages with detailed instructions. Each company literally knew at what time the loading into the wagons would take place. The absence of an effective operational plan is indirectly and eloquently confirmed by Vasilevsky, listing the directives that went to the troops before the start of hostilities (p. 105):

"On May 27, [the headquarters gave instructions to the western border districts to urgently build field front command posts, and on June 19 to bring front-line departments of the Baltic, Western and Kiev special military districts to them. The department of the Odessa district, at the request of the district command, obtained such permission earlier. On June 12-15, these districts were ordered to withdraw divisions located in the depths of the district, closer to the state border. On June 19, these districts received an order to mask airfields, military units, parks, warehouses and bases and disperse aircraft at airfields.

The Marshal does not notice how he informs us with this list that there was no exhaustive and comprehensive coordinated plan, otherwise he would necessarily include such obvious measures as command posts, camouflage of airfields, etc. This list of outright misses in strategic planning ends with the mention of Directive No. 01, which was transmitted to the border districts at 00.30 on June 22. It said that "... during June 22-23, a surprise attack by German troops on the fronts of these districts is possible. ...Attack may start with provocative actions; therefore, the task of our troops is not to succumb to any provocations that could cause major complications." However, the need for the districts to be in full combat readiness, to meet a possible surprise attack by the enemy, was further emphasized. The directive obligated the commanders of the troops: a) during the night of June 22, to covertly occupy the firing points of fortified areas on the state border; b) before dawn, disperse all aviation, including military aviation, over field airfields, carefully disguise it; c) put all units on combat readiness; keep the troops dispersed and camouflaged; d) put the air defense on alert without additional lifting of the assigned staff. Prepare all city blackout activities

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and objects. The directive did not provide for any other measures without special instructions.

In other words, do not take black and white, do not say "yes" and "no". All the pas de deux listed above were to be completed by the troops in the long three hours that remained before the German attack. When hostilities began at dawn, the directive was still being deciphered at district headquarters.

Zhukov ("Memoirs and Reflections", vol. I, pp. 228-229) gives other details:

"However, there were shortcomings in the work of the General Staff apparatus itself. So, when studying the state of affairs in the spring of 1941, it turned out that the [general headquarters, as well as the people's commissar of defense and the commanders of the types and branches of the troops, did not have command posts prepared in case of war, from where it would be possible to carry out command and control of the armed forces, quickly transmit the directives of the Headquarters to the troops, receive and process reports from the troops.

In the prewar years, time for the construction of command posts was lost. When the war began, the High Command, the General Staff, all the headquarters of the armed forces and the central administrations had to exercise leadership from their peacetime offices, which seriously complicated their work.

If the absence of command posts was discovered in the spring (in March? in April?), why weren't they built in the remaining 2-3 months? If the five-year plan can be completed in 4 years, then the command bunker could at least start building during this time. But there were omissions worse than the inconveniences of the offices (p. 236):

"During the revision of operational plans in the spring of 1941 years, the features of the conduct of modern warfare in its initial period were practically not fully taken into account. The People's Commissar for Defense and [the General Staff believed that the war between such major powers as [Germany and the Soviet Union] should begin according to the previously existing scheme: the main forces enter the battle

a few days after the border battles. Fascist Germany was placed on the same terms with us as regards the terms of concentration and deployment. In fact, both the forces and the conditions were far from being equal.

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In this text, the dissonant expression "were not fully taken into account" should be read "were completely ignored". When asked how Zhukov, the victor at Khalkhin Gol, could not learn from the German operations in Poland and France, I am not in a position to give an exhaustive answer. It is possible, of course, that the complete cutting down of commanding cadres led to the fact that in the Red Army and in the General Staff there were no strategic minds of the caliber of Svechin or Isserson. Strategists like Zhukov could talk about protecting the borders, but they taught the troops only the old way and only the offensive.

This is an old and painful topic. At one time, I, in collaboration with Yuri Alekseev (Geller), had a chance to write about this (Rapoport and Alekseev, pp. 192-200). In a strange way, the considerations expressed in the late 1970s have remained relevant to this day. Without going into details here, I will say a few words about it.

From its very inception, the Red Army professed an offensive doctrine, crushing. It came from the revolution and the [civil war, from Frunze to Tukhachevsky and other leaders. True, in the 1920s, the former tsarist general A.A. Svechin proposed a different view - the strategy of starvation, but his approach was resolutely rejected. He himself was repressed twice, in 1931 and 1937, the last time for good. Zhukov considered Stalin a genius on all issues (there is such an excuse in the marshal's memoirs), although he saw the fatal blindness of his calculations. They should have listened to the voice of the Candle (Volkogonov "Stalin", ch. 7):

"The officially approved dogma was simple, beautiful and categorical: "little bloodshed and on foreign territory." The Red Army was to stop the invading aggressor and immediately transfer military operations to his land. Defensive actions were thus of a short-term and transitory nature. Here is what G.S. writes about this. Isserson, an erudite military theorist who miraculously survived the Stalinist purges (see Military History Journal, 1965, No. 1 and No. 3):

"For the entire history of the Military Academy. Frunze and the Academy of the General Staff, the topic "Army on the defensive" has never been worked out. The technical defense was well developed in our country and occupied in all field manuals what was due to it.

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place value. But on an operational scale, talking about the defense of the army in a significant sector of the theater of military operations was considered somehow indecent and almost contradicting our offensive doctrine. Only in 1938, after the destruction of the main command cadres, a timid attempt was made: the General Staff published the work "Fundamentals of a defensive operation". Further, however, no one dared to go. [The provisions of the work did not receive official approval and remained in vain. Needless to say, no one even stuttered about strategic defense.

Stalin, according to Zhukov, was blissfully unaware of the true state of affairs (vol. 1, p. 250):

"I remember how once, in response to my report that the Germans had strengthened their air intelligence and ground reconnaissance, I.V. Stalin said: "They are afraid of us. I will tell you in confidence that our ambassador had a serious conversation personally with Hitler, and he confidentially informed him: please do not worry when you receive information about the concentration of our troops in Poland. Our troops will undergo extensive retraining for especially important tasks in the West."

In the Soviet press, there was, and in the post-Soviet press, a lively discussion about whether Stalin believed [Hitler, and if he did, then why. Not being a psychologist, I do not want to and cannot enter into this scientific dispute, I will confine myself to remarks on known facts. Stalin believed that there was no immediate threat of war, that if there was one, it would begin in a few months. I will give you two pieces of evidence.

In the same book by Zhukov (vol. 1, pp. 230-231) an interesting detail is given:

"At the end of May 1941, me and S.K. Tymoshenko was urgently summoned to the Politburo. We believed that, apparently, permission would finally be given to bring the border military districts to the highest combat readiness. But what was our surprise when I.V. Stalin told us:

— We were approached by the German Ambassador von Schulenburg and conveyed the request of the German government to allow them to search for the graves of soldiers and officers who died in the First World War in battles with the old Russian army. To search for the graves, the Germans created several groups that will arrive at the points according to this border map. You must provide such

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control so that the Germans do not spread their searches deeper and wider than the marked areas. Order the districts to establish close contact with our border guards, who have already been given instructions.

We accepted these words of I.V. with internal bewilderment. Stalin.

We were amazed, on the one hand, by the arrogance and cynicism of the German government, which unceremoniously decided to reconnoiter the terrain and borders in the most important operational areas, and, on the other hand, by the incomprehensible gullibility of I.V. Stalin.

Apparently, guessing our thoughts, A.A. Zhdanov remarked:

— In my opinion, the comrades gloomily met the request of the German government. Maybe you want to say something?

"The Germans are just going to look at the areas where they will strike," I said, "and their version of the search for graves is too primitive.

Commissar added:

"Recently, the Germans have been violating our airspace too often and making deep overflights of our territory. Zhukov and I believe that it is necessary to shoot down German planes.

- The German ambassador assured us on behalf of Hitler that they now have a lot of young people in aviation who are poorly trained professionally. Young pilots have poor orientation in the air. Therefore, the ambassador asked us not to pay special attention to their wandering planes, - I.V. objected. Stalin.

We disagreed with this argument and continued to argue that the planes deliberately fly over our most important objects and descend to unacceptable heights, apparently in order to get a better view of them.

"Well, then," I.V. suddenly said. Stalin - in this case, it is necessary to urgently prepare a note on this issue and demand from Hitler that he stop the arbitrariness of the military. I'm not sure Hitler knows about these flights.

In June, the Germans further intensified the reconnaissance activities of their aviation. Various sabotage and reconnaissance groups more and more often penetrated the border into the depths of our territory.

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Not limited to personal reports, we once again wrote a report to I.V. Stalin and attached a map on which they indicated the areas and directions of German aerial reconnaissance. They asked for specific instructions.

I.V. Stalin replied:

"Convey a message to Vyshinsky about all violations of our air borders, who will deal with Schulenburg on these issues."

Zhukov keeps a strange silence about the group to examine the graves. Apparently, she was allowed into Soviet territory. After all, even before talking with the military, Stalin gave the border guards the appropriate instructions. Had it been done by someone else, he would certainly have been shot after the start of the war.

Zhukov explains the behavior of the leader as follows:

"Hitler took all measures to inspire I.V. Stalin thought about his completely loyal attitude towards the Soviet Union, and repeatedly assured that Germany would never violate its obligations. And oddly enough, I.V. Stalin believed these false assurances of Hitler. He believed that if we pursue an extremely cautious policy and do not give the Germans a reason to start a war, if we fulfill our trade and other obligations, war can be avoided or, in extreme cases, delayed. So thought the entire Stalinist leadership of the country" (p. 240).

"In these difficult conditions, the desire to avoid war turned into I.V. Stalin in the conviction that he would be able to eliminate the danger of war by peaceful means. Hoping for his "wisdom", he overreacted himself and did not understand the insidious tactics and plans of the Nazi government" (p. 247).

Zhukov is strangely defending his highest military authority!

In the late 1980s, Beria's memorandum addressed to Stalin was published. The document is dated 21 June 1941. Here is what it says (Pavlenko, pp. 233-234):

"[...] I again insist on the recall and punishment of our ambassador in Berlin, Dekanozov, who continues to bombard me with "disinformation" about an alleged attack [by Hitler on the USSR] being prepared. He reports that this attack "will begin tomorrow" .

2. The same was radioed by Major General V.I. Tupikov, military attaché in Berlin. This general reports referring to

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his agents that three groups of the Wehrmacht will attack Moscow, Leningrad and Kyiv ...

3. .. Head of the Intelligence Directorate ... Lieutenant General F.I. Golikov complains about Dekanozov and about his subordinate Rookie, who also lies that Hitler concentrated 170 divisions against us on our western border.

4. My people, Iosif Vissarionovich, we firmly remember your wise plan: in 1941 Hitler will not attack us."

Maybe Beria messed up? Maybe there was no such directive from Stalin? This is hard to believe. Stalin himself told Churchill in the summer of 1942: "I did not need warnings about a possible invasion. I knew that there would be a war, but I thought that I could win six months or something like that" (Ahe!, p. 71). The point, of course, is not what Comrade Stalin believed in, but how he acted. The TASS statement of June 14 was more evidence of this. The official directive coming from the leader did not ambiguously state that there would be no war in 1941. The chief trusted overseer of the military, Malenkov, the head of the NKVD, Beria, and others steadily put it into practice.

The behavior of the Soviet leaders shows a complete unpreparedness for the outbreak of war - psychological, administrative, military and any other. The main culprit of this approach is, of course, Stalin. He inspired his henchmen that there would be no war this year. You had to reckon with his plans if you didn't want the NKVD to take care of you.

WHAT KNOW STALIN?

The question posed in the title does not interest us at all from the psychological side. Stalin was the sovereign dictator of the USSR, so his awareness actually determined the policy of the state. It is important to note right away that in the prewar For years, the views of the leader did not remain unchanged.

At first, in 1939-1940, Stalin and his entourage relied on Lenin's thesis that the imperialist powers were fighting among themselves for sources of raw materials and markets. National Socialism was understood as the far right ideology of imperialism, so Hitler had to lead

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pursue the same goals. For this reason, the Fuhrer should not have sought to conquer the USSR, because the Kremlin was ready to buy industrial products from [Germany and sell her raw materials like grain and oil.

There was a methodological trap here. Stalin, like other communists, considered Marxism-Leninism an objective scientific discipline in the manner of physics or astronomy, not realizing that it was just a political and ideological doctrine. For this reason, he constantly wishful thinking. When at the end of 1940 and especially at the beginning of 4] it became clear that Hitler did not want to act according to Lenin's plans and was preparing to attack the USSR, Stalin fell into an extremely difficult situation. difficult position.

Like his predecessor, Lenin, he did not place his comrades-in-arms and subordinates in high regard, he saw that most of them were ignorant upstarts who did not correspond to the posts to which he himself appointed them. He saw, could not fail to see, the colossal gaps in the preparation of the country for war. To admit that the fault in this was primarily his own, Stalin could not organically. So he concocted a convenient doctrine. We need additional time to prepare for war, we just need to delay the start of hostilities as far as possible, for example, until mid-1942. does not want war, only his generals.

Stalin remained in this state of self-hypnosis for several months. At this time, there are many episodes, grotesque, almost unbelievable, when the signs of an approaching attack [of Germany] were ignored by the Soviet leadership - contrary to common sense. We already know that from the middle of 1940, the Luftwaffe could fly into Soviet airspace with impunity, because Beria forbade the border troops to shoot at German aircraft, they were only supposed to report these violations. Stalin habitually ignored such messages. In addition, the capabilities of the Soviet air defense were not very great. According to M.V. Zakharov (p. 228):

"...two-engine fighters were completely absent in the aviation units ... The security of the troops with small-caliber

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anti-aircraft artillery and anti-aircraft machine guns did not exceed 23-37 percent.

It is worth noting that Stalin's strategic visions were naive at best. So for a long time he considered the threat from Japan in the Far East almost as serious as the German one. The USSR maintained 75 selected divisions in this region. At the same time, Stalin did not understand that if, in the worst case, the Kwantung Army went on the offensive, it could only acquire thousands of kilometers of taiga. In other words, the losses of the USSR would have been

insignificant.

Be that as it may, Stalin attached great importance to the problem of Far Eastern security. Therefore, when Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshiko Matsuoka appeared in Moscow on March 25, the Soviet Union really wanted to conclude a non-aggression pact with the Japanese, but they set the condition for the sale of Northern Sakhalin, to which Stalin resolutely refused. Matsuoka drove away from Moscow to Berlin, where Ribbentrop advised him not to stop in Moscow on the way back and not to negotiate there. But the Japanese minister received other instructions from Tokyo.

On April 14, the Soviet-Japanese non-aggression pact was signed in Moscow, after which a banquet was held in the Kremlin in broad daylight. Molotov later claimed that "Stalin and I made Matsuoka drunk and almost carried him into the carriage. These farewells were worth the fact that Japan did not fight with us. In this statement by the Kremlin veteran, almost everything is exaggerated, starting with the fact that the decision to conclude the pact was made in Tokyo. In addition, those present at the Yaroslavl railway station reported that all three were quite drunk and tried to sing "Noisy reeds." Molotov saluted from time to time and proclaimed: "I am a pioneer! I'm always ready!" Stalin hugged the staggering Japanese, but when he saw the German military attache Hans Krebs, he switched his emotions to him. He slapped the German on the back and loudly declared: "We were friends and we will remain friends!" (Mayoge, pp. 347-348).

Stalin continued to play naively even in front of his closest collaborators. Intelligence in this situation lost meaning.

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Relatively quickly after the fall of France, Ivan Proskurov, deputy people's commissar and head of the 5th (intelligence) department of the Red Army, was removed. He was an outstanding personality, one of the outstanding pilots of his time. In 1937, he was awarded the title of Hero - for successful operations in Spain, where he commanded a bomber brigade. He was then in the rank of senior lieutenant, Stalin wrote in the draft decree "major". Three years later, Proskurov was a lieutenant general. Upon his return from Spain, he was appointed commander of the 2nd Aviation Army and a member of the Main Military Council. In April 1939, Stalin made him deputy people's commissar and head of the RU. Proskurov, who had no experience in intelligence work, took up the matter ardently and gave it his whole soul.

Proskurov's position was close to impossible. For two years he was the fifth head of the RU. Four of his predecessors in this post - Semyon Uritsky, Yakov Berzin, Alexander Orlov and Semyon Gendin - ended their lives in the dungeons of the NKVD; 200 employees of the Republic of Uzbekistan were also repressed. During Proskurov's stay in this institution, 365 people were removed from there for various reasons, mainly political. At a meeting of the senior command staff, Voroshilov and Meretskov tried to blame the failure of the first assault on the "Mannerheim Line" on undercover intelligence. Proskurov fought back as best he could. Stalin, it seems, was impressed by the fearless pilot. Here is what he said during the meeting:

"Your soul is not a scout, but the soul of a very naive person in a good sense of the word. The scout must be completely saturated with poison, bile, he must not trust anyone.

In June, Proskurov received the rank of general, but his position was weak. On June 7, he was summoned to the leader, with whom he was alone for a little over an hour. After that Timoshenko, Voroshilov, Meretskov, Shaposhnikov and Smorodinov entered Stalin's cabinet. It is quite probable that the position of the evRU was discussed. If so, then Proskurov had no well-wishers in this group. On June 20, Proskurov signed the intelligence report for the last time. From July 15, these documents were signed by Golikov, who was officially appointed chief of the RU on the 27th. Proskurov was sent to the People's Commissariat of Defense. He returned to aviation, but in the summer of 1941 he was arrested and shot without trial.

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There are various conjectures for which Proskurov was removed. All of them have a certain degree of probability, but none can be backed up by documents. I will list them anyway. Stalin could sympathize with Proskurov, but found him difficult to control. Timoshenko could not stand him, he did not forget the opinion of the head of the Republic of Uzbekistan after visiting the Finnish front: "Instead of artillery preparation, a cavalry attack ... instead of air bombardment, an order to attach bayonets" (see MigrVu, pp. 138-9) . Stalin did not like Proskurov's conclusion that Operation Sea Lion (landing in England) had no chance of success. He reminded the head of the RU: he had not predicted that the German campaign in France would end so quickly.

Be that as it may, Proskurov was removed from the Intelligence Directorate. Filipp Golikov, who replaced him, an opportunist to the marrow of his bones, quickly came to Stalin's court and remained his confidant to the end.

Sensitive to the mood of the leader, Golikov regularly downplayed the scale of the German preparations. Receiving reports from the information department of the GRU from Lieutenant Colonel Vasily Novobrants, he improved them. In December 1940, he, in particular, subtracted 15 divisions from those located on the border of the USSR. The enraged Rookie, bypassing his chief, sent out to the troops and to the governing bodies the famous Report No. 8, where it was indicated that Germany had concentrated 110 divisions against the USSR and their deployment was offensive. Stalin got acquainted with this report on December 22 and returned it to Poskrebyshchev for filing in the file without notes. Chief of the General Staff Meretskov became interested in real data, but he was soon removed. Zhukov, who replaced him (vol. 2, p. 239), reports that in April 1941, according to the GRU, the number of German divisions concentrated against the USSR was only 72-73 plus 10 in Romania. He does not remember about the Rookie. Togo by this time was removed from the GRU.

Golikov's method is very well illustrated by his report dated March 20, 1941 entitled "Statements, [organizational measures] and options for military operations of the German army against the USSR" (see the Military Literature Project on the Internet, Primary Sources). The conclusions are actually laid down in the first phrase of the document:

"Most of the intelligence data concerning the possibilities of war with the USSR in the spring of 1941 comes from the English

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American sources, whose task today is undoubtedly the desire to worsen relations between the USSR and Germany. At the same time, based on the nature of the emergence and development of fascism, as well as its tasks - the implementation of Hitler's cherished plans, so fully and "colorfully" set out in his book "My Struggle", a summary of all available intelligence data for the period July 1940-March 1941 deserve some serious attention.

Recently, British, American and other sources have been talking about an alleged (emphasis mine. — V.R.) German attack on the Soviet Union being prepared. Of all the statements received by us at different times, the following deserve attention next..."

Golikov grouped the received reports and collected information into 16 paragraphs, but preceded them with a label supposedly. Here is the end of the document:

"Conclusion:

1. On the basis of all the above statements and possible options for action in the spring of this year, I believe that the most possible date for the start of actions against the USSR will be the moment after the victory over England or after the conclusion of an honorable peace for Germany with her.
2. Rumors and documents that speak of the inevitability of a war against the USSR in the spring of this year must be regarded as disinformation coming from British and even, perhaps, German intelligence.

In other words, reporting to Stalin, Golikov repeated the leader's instructions that Hitler would never fight on two fronts. For this reason, the head of the RU, although he cited a lot of valuable information in the report, which covered his rear, however, indiscriminately qualified them as "like disinformation coming from British and even, perhaps, German intelligence." It is worth saying a few words about Golikov's further career. With the beginning of the war, he remained for some time at the head of the Intelligence Board, then went to England and the USA as the head of a military mission. From October 1941 g. - in the troops; commanded armies and fronts, but did not win laurels. For a short time he was Eremenko's deputy at the Stalingrad front, where, according to Khrushchev, he showed amazing cowardice, he wrote to the Polit-

bureau denunciations against their front commander. Golikov, meanwhile, remained a confidant of Stalin, for this reason he was appointed head of [the main personnel department of the People's Commissariat of Defense in 1943]. In 1950, Golikov went downhill, but under Khrushchev he again fell into favor in a strange way, he was made the head of the Political Administration (1958-1962) and a marshal (1961). When documents from the pre-war period began to surface, in particular Sorge's reports with Golikov's notes, the marshal decided to mow down. He staged a mental breakdown, climbed onto the table in his office, tore his mouth with his fingers, squealed, and so on. The veteran was sent to rest — that is, to the Inspectorate of the Ministry of Defense. No investigation was scheduled (see Rapoport, pp. 398-399). Until 1966, Golikov remained a member of the Central Committee and a deputy of the Supreme Soviet; he died in 1980 at the age of 80.

Stalin received many warnings about the impending attack. From Soviet diplomats and agents, from the command of the border troops, from Churchill, from various well-wishers. All this had no effect on the leader. In any case, he did not change his policy. On May 5, he spoke in the Kremlin to the graduates of the military academies. The speech lay in the party archive until 1991. After the publication of a short transcript of the speech (there is no full transcript), revisionist historians tried to present it as evidence of Stalin's aggressive intentions in 1941, but achieved nothing - the leader's phrases about that offensive is the best form of defense is hardly more than a standard cliché. Much more revealing are other aspects of speech. Stalin talked a lot and in detail about new types of weapons, but for the most part he uttered well-known vulgarities. There are also a few blunders. Here is one very revealing:

"Is the German army really invincible?

From the point of view of the military, there is nothing special in the German army in tanks, and in artillery, and in aviation.

In addition, boasting, complacency, arrogance appeared in the German army. Military thought is not advancing, military technology is not only lagging behind ours, but Germany in terms of aviation is beginning to overtake America.

The narcissistic dictator did not notice how he stepped on shaky ground. After all, if there are no invincible armies in nature, then this truth is also true in relation to

our beloved Red Army. An arrogant remark about the ordinary Wehrmacht did not prevent these unremarkable German troops from knocking at the gates of Moscow a few months later. Most likely, for this reason, the text of the speech was caulked into the archive.

Some remarks of the future generalissimo sound simply comical:

"The role of the cavalry in modern warfare is exceptionally great. She will develop success after breaking through the front. She will pursue the retreating parts of the enemy, wedged into the breakthrough. In particular, it is obliged, while pursuing the retreating artillery units, not to give the opportunity to select new firing positions and stop at them.

Or:

"I didn't call the infantry here. Modern infantry is people dressed in armor, these are scooters, tankers."

I wonder if Zhukov remembered the brilliant instruction of the leader when he sent infantry ahead of the tanks? And further:

"One fighter with a self-loading rifle is equal to 3 fighters armed with an ordinary rifle."

It seems that Stalin is trying to convince officers with higher military education of the advantages of automatic small arms. He only keeps silent that it was his protegee, Marshal Kulik, who for a long time did not allow the production of machine guns. Kulik at that time remained the Deputy People's Commissar and Chief Artillery Chief.

— At the same graduation party (during the reception, after the meeting) Stalin proclaimed:

"And now that we have reconstructed our army, saturated it with equipment for modern combat, when we have become strong, now we need to move from defense to offensive."

A few days after this supposedly militant speech, Stalin tried to appease the Germans. On May 10, he severed diplomatic relations with the governments of Belgium, Holland, Norway, Greece and Yugoslavia and ordered the expulsion of the personnel of the embassies of these countries from the USSR

Speaking of warnings, one cannot fail to mention the reports of Richard Sorge. On November 18, 1940, a month before the approval of the Barbarossa plan, he reported from Japan that Germany was preparing an action against the USSR. On December 29, he clarified: "for advice

80 German divisions were concentrated on the border, 40 in the Leipzig area, 28 divisions were transferred to Poland from France. In the middle of May, on the 41st, Sorge radioed: 6 German armies, 150 divisions, were stationed along the Soviet border, the attack was scheduled for June 20-22. On June 12, Moscow reacted to Sorge's messages for the first time: he received a severe reprimand for "panic and unreliable information." The next report to Sorge (the resident of Ramsay) was as follows:

"June 13, 1941. I repeat: nine armies, consisting of 150 divisions, will begin an offensive on a broad front at dawn on June 22, 1941."

We must pay tribute to the firmness of the leader: no arguments could change his position. In mid-June, the People's Commissar of the Navy Kuznetsov was convinced of this. Here is how this episode was recorded in the telephone message of Stalin's personal secretary A.N. Poskrebyshhev:

"June 13, 1941 Today I.V. Admiral Kuznetsov visited Stalin in the Kremlin. In his report, he mentioned, even presenting statistical data, the withdrawal of all German ships from Soviet ports and asked permission to withdraw all Soviet ships from German ones. The "master" escorted him out. Didn't the admiral read today's TASS report, which refutes the provocative rumors about the German attack on the Soviet Union? Everywhere there are provocations. All our enemies and false friends are trying to pit us against Hitler in their own interests...

Earlier, at the end of May, Timoshenko and Zhukov tried to convince Stalin to put the border military districts on the highest alert. The leader categorically refused. Because it is a dialectic.

In the first months of 1941, it dawned on Stalin that the country was about to be involved in a major war, he wanted to delay this event by all means. He put forward the theory that it was not Hitler who wanted the war, but his generals, and therefore it was necessary not to give them a reason, as in 1914. Then Tsar Nicholas hurried with general mobilization, in response to which the German General Staff, which at that time had great independence in military affairs, forced the outbreak of war - for fear of being squeezed from both sides. Stalin had no idea about the new situation in Germany, where Hitler kept the generals on a short leash: he practically did not consult with them, only issued directives. In addition, the Fuhrer did not initiate the military into his long-term plans.

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When Stalin realized that the 1939 pact was a colossal miscalculation in policy and strategy, he, in his usual manner, tried to avoid responsibility for this step. That is why he so stubbornly ignored the warnings coming from various quarters that a German attack was imminent. For Stalin, such a reaction was natural - otherwise one would have to admit the short-sightedness and viciousness of the previous course. And there could be no question of admitting a mistake, even in a narrow circle. It is also possible that fear partially paralyzed his will.

In an effort not to provoke the Germans at any cost, Stalin almost completely took away freedom of action from the military leadership of the country. It was impossible to shoot down German reconnaissance aircraft that were taking aerial photographs of the territory of the USSR. Soviet troops remained in a garrison position. But Timoshenko and Zhukov are far from innocent lambs. There was no plan for the deployment of troops in the event of an attack (Vasilevsky and Zhukov deny this, but unfounded, which is natural: they have nothing to put on the table). The organization and provision of top military leadership also fell out of their field of vision. There was not even a command bunker, so the Kirovskaya metro station had to be hastily refurbished.

WAS THE USSR GOING TO ATTACK GERMANY

He was going to, but not at all in the way that revisionist historians portray it. In principle, the Kremlin has always dreamed of world domination. In the summer of 1940, Molotov put it this way to the Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs:

"Now we are convinced more than ever that the brilliant Lenin was not wrong in assuring us that the Second World War would allow us to seize power in all of Europe, just as the First World War allowed us to seize power in Russia."

From the first days of its existence, the Red Army propagated an offensive doctrine - there was no other. It did not follow from this that she was constantly advancing. In 1941, people still remembered well how the attempt to take Warsaw in 1920 ended. The ability to attack has never been among the strengths of the Russian army. Here is Klyuchevsky's observation:

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"Our state machine is adapted for defense, not attack. It gives us as much stability as it takes mobility. When we passively fight back, we are stronger than ourselves, because our defensive forces are joined by our inability to quickly understand our impotence, i.e. our courage is increased by the fact that, being frightened, we are not going to run away soon. On the contrary, when attacking, we use only 10% of our strength, the rest is spent on setting these 10% in motion ... Strength is an act, not a potency; uncombined with discipline, it kills itself. We are the lowest organisms in international zoology: we keep moving even after we lose our heads."

For a long time, Stalin actually did not react to the concentration of German troops near the borders of the USSR. One of the main reasons was his inability to understand the flow of incoming information, to distinguish valuable intelligence data from disinformation or politically motivated incitement. Those, in particular, came from the British. On June 14, 1940, British Ambassador Stafford Cripps told Molotov that "according to the information we have", Hitler would turn on the USSR in the event of the fall of France. Churchill repeated this warning on June 26. Meanwhile, British intelligence at that time believed that (Beatu, p. 101):

"Germany and the USSR have every reason to avoid a collision - at least for the present."

On the other hand, it was impossible to completely ignore the impending war. Something was being done, to be more precise, a lot was being done. Covert mobilization took place under the guise of training camps. On paper, the size of the Red Army in the 22 months before the war increased from 1,943,000 to 4,629,000 people. This by no means meant readiness for the coming war.

The version that the German invasion on June 22 prevented the Soviet attack on [Germany] is based on the assertion of Nazi propaganda. After the war, Hitler's admirer and Holocaust denier David Irving began to preach it, followed by Günter Gillesen, Ernst Thoritsch, Werner MazeriR Raack ([H.iKas\$, pp. 69-70). In the West, these attempts were not successful and began to be forgotten when this approach was picked up by Russian tabloid journalism, which, however, still could not provide any proof.

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evidence. In any case, the sensation was impressive, which speaks of the historical unpreparedness of the Russian-speaking reading public.

There is a lot of talk these days about offensive plans prepared at the General Staff. These are called four. Three of them, dated July 1940, September 18, 1940 and March 11, 1941, were drawn up in case of a German attack on the USSR. At the same time, strategic deployment provided for the immediate transfer of hostilities to enemy territory. In other words, these plans were not aimed at a preemptive attack.

In addition, on May 15, the General Staff drew up a note on a preventive war against Germany. A handwritten copy on the letterhead of the people's commissar has been preserved, two persons who were supposed to sign the document, Timoshenko and Zhukov, are named below, but there are no signatures. There is no date, on one of the attached maps is May 15. Judging by the handwriting, the 15-page note was written by Vasilevsky, at that time the deputy chief of the operational department [of the General Staff. This plan did not contain any ambitious goals, its purpose was to interfere with the military preparations of Germany, which were well known to the Soviet General Staff.

There is no direct indication that Stalin saw this note. It cannot be ruled out, but there are no notes or other evidence that he approved it. More importantly, the note does not indicate the date of the attack - neither conjectural, nor exact, nor spare. It follows that the document was not an operational plan. This is not even a belated reaction to the far-reaching German preparations. In fact, if I am going to get ahead of a prepared enemy, I cannot ignore his plans and deadlines, I must certainly compare them with my own. There is nothing of the kind in the document, it says (Military Historical Journal, 1992, No. 1, p. 18):

"...documentary data on the operational plans of potential adversaries... The General Staff of the Red Army did not believe."

It is worth remembering that the official directive coming from the leader was that there would be no war in the forty-first. This is explicitly stated in Beria's memorandum quoted above. If Stalin approved the plan for an immediate

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fall, Beria would have been one of the first to receive this information...

From everything we can conclude that Timoshenko Zhukov's plan of [May 5] was nothing more than considerations, to which the matter did not come to be applied. Stalin could take them into account for the future, say, in 1942. Besides, if on May 15th they had been going to perform within a month or two, then more numerous documentary traces would have been left. An army of millions cannot be moved with a short memo. This is probably why the Germans were unable to detect preparations for an offensive on the territory of the USSR, although Hitler shouted about it long before June 22.

REPRESSIVE CONSULTS

In 1941, a new wave of arrests began in the Red Army. After the purges of 1936-1938. dissatisfaction with the repressions in the army environment was strong and obvious. Protests came even from those who at first rejoiced at the elimination of their personal enemies. For example, in 1937 Kulik welcomed the arrests of army intellectuals, but later began to stand up for some of those arrested, for example, for A.V. Khruleva. We have already seen how Stalin himself in the spring of 1940 played along with anti-arrest sentiments at a meeting of the committee members. Nevertheless, in the pre-war months, repression resumed.

The scope of this work does not allow us to discuss this topic in detail, but a few remarks are worth making. The Soviet regime has been repressive since its inception. The suppression of his opponents—active, potential, and even imaginary—has always been on the agenda. At the same time, the real guilt of the arrested did not play a special role, the main consideration was always practical, or rather political, benefit.

It often happens that the authors, describing the repressions, give the reader the impression that they were committed because of the suspicion and vindictiveness of Stalin. It is impossible to agree with such an interpretation. Organized violence lies at the foundation of Soviet power and follows from its totalitarian character. Repressions, for example, such as the execution of hostages, began immediately after October, and not at all on the initiative of

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ve Stalin. His first serious contribution to the punitive policy was the Shakhty case of 1928. The time was a turning point: the New Economic Policy was ending, collectivization was approaching. Stalin had consolidated his power by this time. The party apparatus began to create a cult of its leader, the mass of the party responded positively. Soon, at the end of 1929, Voroshilov's article "Stalin and the Red Army" appeared, which served as a directive for a complete revision of the history of the Civil War. What Orwell immortalized began: "He who controls the present controls the past."

The Shakhty process served as a prototype for other similar cases. Here is a summary of his story. The situation in the mines of the Rostov region at that time was unfavorable, there were many accidents for standard Soviet reasons: unskilled technical personnel, drunkenness of workers, neglect of safety rules. Authorized by the OGPU for the North Caucasus, Yu.G. Evdokimov found his explanation, namely, a counter-revolutionary conspiracy. In the letters of the former mine owners, he suspected "subversive instructions" to the conspirators, although he could not decipher their meaning. This did not matter to him: the bourgeois specialists were guilty by the very fact of their class nature.

When the chairman of the OGPU Menzhinsky, dissatisfied with the development of Evdokimov, gave him two weeks to solve the cipher, he appealed to Stalin. The leader believed in the conspiracy immediately, he achieved that the Politburo instructed the commission under his chairmanship to finally look into this issue; The commission included Yanson, Molotov, Kuibyshev and Bukharin. After that, Menzhinsky took his hands at his sides, and the OGPU discovered an international conspiracy sent from Paris, Berlin and Warsaw. At the April plenum of the Central Committee in 1928, Stalin gave the rationale for future processes:

"It would be foolish to think that international capital will leave us alone. No, comrades, this is not true. Classes exist, and international capital exists, and it cannot calmly watch how a country building socialism develops. Previously, international capital tried to overthrow the Soviet government through direct military intervention. This attempt failed. Now he is trying and will try in the future to weaken our economic strength by

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invisible economic intervention, not always explicitly, but quite seriously organizing sabotage, planning all sorts of "crises" in a particular industry, thereby ensuring the possibility of future military intervention. All this is an integral part of the class struggle of international capital against Soviet power. There can be no talk of accidents."

The process lasted almost a month and revealed its artificial nature. Of the 53 defendants, only 10 pleaded guilty on all counts; there were many overlaps in the testimony of witnesses. | 1 person was shot, the rest were given various terms of imprisonment (although the German engineers were slowly released). Nevertheless, the main goal was achieved. Nearly 100,000 workers, peasants, and schoolchildren attended the trial as spectators, who were poorly versed in legal intricacies, but were firmly convinced of the malice of the omnipresent class enemies.

Stalin sincerely believed in the guilt of the defendants, although he understood that many details were invented or arranged by the OGPU. But he was not interested in the fate of individuals, but in the overall political picture that emerged as a result of the process. He did not believe alone, but very many members of the party and ordinary people. Even Nikolai Bukharin believed:

"In the Donbass, with the help of ordinary workers, a wrecking organization was uncovered, which, through a number of intermediate links, was connected with foreign capital, with large foreign capitalist organizations, with emigrant circles, and finally, with the military headquarters of some foreign powers. . It consisted largely of the former owners of the respective mines and mines, and some of them had a very vile counter-revolutionary experience ... It consisted of White Guard engineers and technicians, many of whom turned out to be former Denikinists, some - former counterintelligence officers Denikin... They had contacts with foreign countries through some foreign engineers, and some of these engineers turned out to be members of fascist organizations... The ideology of this organization was the overthrow of Soviet power, the restoration of the capitalist regime... Their closest the task was to decisively speculate on the war and on a new intervention ... not except

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on the possibility of the existence of organizations like this one in other areas; there is no guarantee that such vileness did not start up in the military chemical industry; although there is no direct evidence for this assumption.

It is easy to see that in his paranoid confidence, Bukharin, now declared a liberal and humanist, goes even further than the totalitarian villain Stalin. It is worth adding that Trotsky, who was in exile, did not protest.

In the early 1930s, there were three more similar trials: the trial of the Industrial Party (November 25-December 7, 1930), the trial of the Allied Menshevik Bureau (March 1-9, 1931), the trial of Metro-Vickers employees (April 2-18, 1933). The technique of show trials was improved, the defendants pleaded guilty, which was followed by indulgence: foreigners were expelled from the USSR, some Soviet subjects were even released (engineer Ramzin even became a Stalin Prize laureate). The main goal was achieved: the population was convinced of the reality of sabotage, thousands of bourgeois specialists were turned into slaves of the NKVD.

In parallel with these open processes in the early 30s. The OGPU carried out Operation Spring without much fuss, during which more than three thousand former tsarist officers who were in the service of the Red Army were arrested. Several people were shot, the rest were released a few months later, but now they could only be in teaching, almost all of them were destroyed in further purges. Again, Stalin sincerely believed in the monarchist officer conspiracy uncovered by the OGPU, which at the same time kidnapped the head of the Russian All-Military Union, General Kutepov, from Paris. Once again, Stalin was not the most suspicious. When the arrested Kakurin and Troitsky accused Tukhachevsky of involvement in a conspiracy concocted by the Chekists, Stalin, after protests from Gamarnik, Yakir and others, decided to sort it out, personally interrogated the accusers and did not believe them.

After the assassination of Kirov, hysteria in the country and the party reached new heights. Stalin now demanded that the NKVD discover a conspiracy of the oppositionists, behind whom stood international imperialism, and again the beloved department did not let us down. There were three open show trials and many secret trials. In particular, in June 1937, in a few hours in a closed

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At the meeting of the Military Collegium, eight top officials of the Red Army were sentenced to death: Tukhachevsky, Yakir, Uborevich, Kork, Feldman, Eideman, Primakov, Putna. The process of self-destruction of the Bolshevik Party went out of whack. Of the eight judges at the June trial, six were soon eliminated. For two years, the composition of the NKVD was updated several times, while two out of three people's commissars were shot.

MILITARY CONSPIRACY OF THE 41st YEAR

Again we are not in a position to go into details. The method of the NKVD and the NKGB under Beria was the same as in the days of Yagoda and Yezhov: they would grab one person, extract evidence from him, on the basis of which others could be arrested. Testimony, slander and self-incrimination were the main, most often the only, grounds for repression. Yagoda once remarked in a moment of frankness that the organs are powerless when the arrested person denies everything. But that was before the authorities were allowed to use physical methods of interrogation, in other words, beatings and torture.

Hysteria is usually generated by fear of the unknown. In the Middle Ages, natural disasters such as plague or crop failures were routinely attributed to Jews, sorcerers and witches. In Soviet times, failures, miscalculations and stupidities in politics and economics were interpreted as intrigues of bourgeois specialists, party oppositionists or agents of imperialism. Stalin and his henchmen, primarily Molotov, Yezhov, Shkiryatov, were always ready to accept such explanations on faith; there is nothing to say about ordinary party members and ordinary citizens.

The Cheka-OGPU-NKVD, for their part, were constantly ready to inflate dangers, find and fabricate enemies; otherwise, there was no need for the existence of punitive organs. Insidious, sophisticated pests and spies who settled everywhere made the Chekists necessary and significant. They tried especially hard if a social order came from above. This was the case in the mid-thirties, when Stalin proclaimed that with the development of socialism, the resistance of the exploiting classes should increase. Yagoda and Yezhov succeeded in this field, especially the latter, who no one

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succumbed to paranoia and suspicion. Yezhov was sincerely convinced that, besides himself and Stalin, only a few people were not enemies.

"Iron People's Commissar" Yezhov pushed the scale of the purges to the physical limit when, in the infamous order No. 00447 of July 30, 1931, he established mandatory norms for regions and republics. This order was approved by the Politburo in accordance with all the rules and received the force of law. The norms were as follows: in total, about 270 thousand people were supposed to be repressed in the USSR, including about 76 thousand in the first category (execution). As always, the task of the party and Comrade Stalin was shockingly overfulfilled. Only in 1938, 638 thousand 509 people were arrested, 328 thousand 618 were shot. In two years, 1937 and 1938, more than 1 million 975 thousand, shot about 682 thousand. At the beginning of 1938, it began to dawn on Stalin and other leaders that with such a rate of shooting of party members and bureaucrats, the USSR would soon cease to function. In January, the Central Committee adopted a resolution on excesses in the fight against the enemies of the people, but it was not easy to stop decentralized proscriptions: it took most of 1938.

Beria headed the organs as an alternative to Yezhov and at first successfully acted as a moderate. In this game, he scored a certain number of points, especially since in terms of intelligence and ingenuity, Beria was much superior to his predecessor and almost everyone in the Stalinist leadership. However, his moral core, like that of the majority in his department, was Chekist and Bolshevik. This meant readiness to fulfill any, the most inhuman, order of the revolution, i.e. Stalin. At the end of 1940, the time came for Beria to prove his usefulness and indispensability. Here is a statistical illustration:

Convicted on political grounds

We see that in 194 the repressions intensified. Although the number of arrests increased slightly, the number of those executed increased by almost 5 times. Another feature of this peri

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The ode is that terror has become silent. Holidays of hatred, show trials, bloodthirsty letters from working people, mass rallies demanding death—all these attributes of 1937 were absent. People were now disappearing quietly, being erased from life, vanishing, as in an Orwellian novel.

Chronologically, they started with the defense industry. The first arrests were in the People's Commissariat of Ammunition: October 23, 1940 — Boris Efremov, head of the 2nd Main Directorate, November 12 — Deputy People's Commissar Nikolai Khrenkov. On December 11, two deputy people's commissars, Vasily Shibanov and Mikhail Inyashkin, were arrested; on May 30, 1941, the turn came to people's commissar Ivan Sergeev and Alexander Khodyakov, former deputy people's commissar, at the time of his arrest, a member of the Defense Industry Council under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. More three senior officials of the People's Commissariat of Ammunition were taken in the summer of 1941: Sergei Gorin, Daniil Irlin and Georgy Tolstov. There is no particular point in examining the accusations in detail; these are mutual slanders that are usual for the authorities. Here is a simple example - People's Commissar Sergeev:

"The testimonies of SIDOR, KHODYAKOV, COOPER, GORIN, INYASHKIN, SHIBANOV, YEFREMOV, KHRENKOV, TOLSTOV and IRLIN are distinguished by the fact that he was one of the leading members of the anti-Soviet organization, carried out wrecking and espionage work."

In the case of his deputy Inyashkin we read:

"He is convicted by the testimony of ZOMBE, YEFREMOV, TOLSKY, KHRENKOV, SHIBANOV, SERGEEV, TOLSTOV, DYNKIN, IRLIN and GORIN in belonging to the Kanti-Soviet organization and carrying out wrecking work."

The coincidence of wording and surnames are striking. Inyashkin incriminates Sergeev, Sergeev incriminates Inyashkin - which was required to be proved. This cross-pollination was used very widely, it was considered legally lawful and a sufficient basis for executions.

The aviation industry has long been in the crosshairs of the NKVD. Designers Tupolev and Petlyakov were taken in 1937 as organizers of the Russian Fascist Party. At the beginning of 1939, they ended up in the Bolshevik "sharashka" together with other specialists. The trial in absentia of these techies took place in May 1940. Almost all received ten years and five years of defeat.

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rights, in July they were unexpectedly released with the removal of a criminal record.

But this important branch of industry could not be left unattended. On November 27, 1940, Boris Akimov, chief engineer of the 4th Main Directorate of the People's Commissariat of the Aviation Industry, was taken. Further, everything happened according to the established standard: he was beaten out of testimony against Ivan Mikhailov, the head of the 4th Main Directorate, and off we went. To the Lubyanka

senior officials of the People's Commissariat were caught: Leonid Vodyanitsky (January 17, 1941), Anisim Kaminsky (May 5), Dmitry Korolev (May 6). They all carried out wrecking work and, as you might guess, confessed.

Do not forget the People's Commissariat of Arms. On June 7, People's Commissar Boris Vannikov was dragged to the Lubyanka. The named persons are the tip of the pyramid or iceberg. Among those arrested, for each of the responsible bureaucrats, there were many employees of a lower rank.

Turning from the defense industry to the Red Army, it is worth noting right away that the repressions hit the air force very hard. On April 9, the Politburo discussed the phenomenon of frequent accidents in military aviation - 2-3 aircraft per day; it was concluded that the reason lay in the lack of discipline. Decided: 1) to remove the head of the Air Force Rychagov, 2) to prosecute Colonel Mironov (head of the operational flights department of the Air Force Headquarters), 3) to reprimand People's Commissar Timoshenko for the fact that "in his report of April 8, 1941, he, in fact, helped Comrade Rychagov to hide from the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR the shortcomings and ulcers that take place in the Red Army Air Force.

On April 12, Rychagov was officially dismissed and sent to study at the Academy. Timoshenko and Zhukov submitted to the Politburo a draft order to punish the guilty. After reviewing the document, Stalin wrote: "T-schu Timoshenko. I agree with the reservation, however, that the order should include a paragraph about comrade. Proskurov and to comrade. Proskurov was put on trial along with Comrade. Mironov. It will be fair and just." The order of the People's Commissar of Defense No. 0022, issued on the same day, in particular, stated:

"Deputy Chief of the Main Directorate of the Red Army Air Force, Lieutenant General of Aviation Proskurov I.I. for an obviously criminal order that violates elementary

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the rules of the flight service, as a result of which 3 accidents occurred, in which 7 people died and 2 people were injured, to be removed from their positions and brought to justice.

There was no trial, but the accusations were recorded in personal files. On April 21, Proskurov sent a memorandum to Stalin and Zhdanov, in which he outlined "considerations on the merits of preparing aviation for war":

"I consider the main drawback in aviation training to be the inability for the most part, even personnel, to reliably operate in difficult weather conditions and at night, the low level of fire and reconnaissance training (most crews do not know how to find targets, even at large points)."

On May 4, 1941, Stalin passed the decision of the Politburo, which stated:

"Offer to the Prosecutor of the USSR comrade. Bochkov in relation to Lieutenant General of Aviation Proskurov and Colonel Mironov to consider their case in court and, bearing in mind their merits in working in the Red Army, limit themselves to public censure.

Proskurov was appointed to the post of commander of the Air Force of the 7th Army, located in Karelia.

Meanwhile, sensitive organs realized that the party and comrade Stalin expected shock results from them in identifying enemies who had settled in the Air Force of the Red Army. Arrests began in April. On the 21st they took division engineer Ivan Sakrier, head of the Air Force Armaments Directorate, soon a prominent designer of aircraft guns, Yakov Taubin. Testimonies were quickly knocked out of them, on the basis of which Grigory Mikhno, head of the Experimental Department of the Air Force Armament Directorate, was arrested on April 27. A military engineer was taken away on April 22 | rank of Pyotr Nikonov, head of the 8th Directorate of the Air Force, on May 18 - Colonel [Georgy Shevchenko, head of the Air Force Scientific Testing Ground for Aviation Armaments.

On May 10, the Politburo decided that the combat training of aviation in the Orel and Moscow districts was unsatisfactory, so the respective commanders were removed: Major General Kotov and Lieutenant General Pyotr Pumpur. The first was sent to teach at the academy, but the second, Hero of the Soviet Union, did not get off so lightly. On May 27, he was accused of improper selection of personnel, imputing him to blame, in particular,

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that he wanted to take as his deputy Ernst Schacht, a participant in the fighting in Spain, who was in the same position in the Oryol district. Hero of the Soviet Union Schacht, a German from Switzerland, who lived in the USSR since 1922, has long been under suspicion - he was at one time a pilot of the repressed Alksnis, the former head of the Air Force Directorate in 1931-1937. Military counterintelligence was assigned to check the foreigner. On the 30th they took Mine, the next day - Pumpura. Soon they were transferred to the NKGB.

On May 15, 1941, a German three-engine Yu-52 plane invaded Soviet airspace, flew freely along the Bialystok-Minsk-Smolensk-Moscow route and landed at the Central Aerodrome of the capital. At the present time in the Russian press one can find very intriguing explanations why this "Junkers" was not intercepted; for example, that he delivered Hitler's message to Stalin; this motif is used in the novel by Igor Bunich. A more realistic, albeit official, version comes down to the fact that the air defense system, which was then in its infancy, simply missed it. You can believe it: as you know, the situation repeated itself in the 80s during the flight of Matthias Rust. It is worth recalling that from October 1939 until the start of the war, German aircraft over 500 times invaded the airspace of the USSR, and most intensively in the first half of 1941. Not infrequently, including after the Yu-52 flight - they landed on Soviet territory, sometimes even in groups. It was strictly forbidden to open fire on violating aircraft. In accordance with the "Convention on the Procedure for the Settlement of Conflicts and Incidents on the State Border between the USSR and Germany" concluded on June 10, 1940, the Soviet side filed official protests, to which the Germans did not pay serious attention.

attention.

The reaction of the top of the Red Army did not follow immediately. Only on June 10, Timoshenko issued order No. 0035 "On the fact of unhindered passage of the Yu-52 aircraft across the border." It said that VNOS services (air surveillance, warning, communications)

discovered the intruder when it went deep into Soviet territory for 29 km, after which they mistook it for a scheduled DC-3 aircraft and calmed down. As for the Air Force, the headquarters allowed the Junkers to land at the Central Airfield of Moscow. In conclusion, the Commissar

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reprimanded two air defense officers (Major General Sazonov and Major Avtonomov). At the Air Force headquarters, Major Generals Volodin and Grendal escaped with remarks.

This belated order shows that the ill-fated flight was not considered a major emergency. Again, if the flight had been secretly agreed with Stalin, they would hardly have drawn attention to the fact that permission was issued by the Air Force headquarters. In addition, even if a secret correspondence between Hitler and Stalin really took place, the choice of an intruder aircraft flying more than 1000 km over foreign territory seems extremely doubtful. He could have been shot down against instructions, he could have had an accident. This happened in the spring of 1940 with a German aircraft over Belgian territory, and the invasion plans fell into undesirable hands. Whether the Yu-52 flight was connected with the arrests of Stern and Smushkevich, which will be discussed below, cannot be said with certainty. Against such a connection is the fact that Stern was appointed head of air defense only in April, i.e. shortly before the incident, and Smushkevich had nothing to do with air defense at all and who was then in the hospital. On the other hand, the practice of the Soviet leadership often had no logical underpinnings. For this reason, nothing prevented Stalin and the NKVD from declaring the Jews of Stern and Smushkevich as accomplices of the Nazis.

The commander of the air defense of the Red Army, Hero of the Soviet Union, Colonel General Stern, was arrested on June 7, the first twice Hero of the Soviet Union, Lieutenant General Yakov Smushkevich, the next day. Smushkevich received his first Star in 1937 for Spain, where he was under the pseudonym of General Douglas. Smushkevich was a living legend. In April 1938 it crashed during a training flight. He was pulled out of the rubble with his legs broken from the feet to the hips, with severe head wounds, a concussion and a burnt back. Nevertheless, after a difficult operation, he continued to fly and received a second Hero Star for Khalkhin Gol in 1939. He served as head of the Air Force Directorate, inspector general of the Air Force, and before his arrest, assistant chief of the General Staff for aviation. Smushkevich was arrested in the hospital, three days after a complex operation.

The arrests of Stern and Smushkevich raise questions about Zhukov's role. At Khalkhin Gol, Zhukov was subordinate to the command

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Stern, who was on the Far Eastern Front, and their relationship was not the best. [General Grigorenko, a participant in this operation, does not rate Zhukov's actions very highly. The victory of the Soviet troops was due to their great numerical and technical superiority. At the same time (Grigorenko, ch. 15):

"...we suffered huge losses, primarily due to the lack of qualifications of the command. In addition, the character of Georgy Konstantinovich, who did not know how to feel sorry for people, had an effect. I did not stay long with him in the army, but even during this time I managed to earn his hostility with my reports to Stern. He is a cruel and vindictive man, so I was seriously afraid of getting into the war under his direction."

Further, Grigorenko describes the fate of the book about the battles at Khalkhin Gol, written by officer-operators, participants in the battles:

"The work is exclusively business. It reveals very well the shortcomings in the training of troops and officers. Combat actions are described and analyzed in detail. They show the use of military branches, the rear, the shortcomings of command. It does not contain direct attacks on Zhukov and praises of Stern, but everyone who reads will understand who is worth what. Zhukov also understood this.

The book was written immediately after the events and was presented to the General Staff. There it was read and received warm approval. Zhukov at that time commanded the Kyiv military district. While the book was going through reviews and preparing for publication, Zhukov was appointed chief of the General Staff. The first thing he did upon taking this position was to demand a book about Khalkhin Gol. I read it from cover to cover and wrote: "They were not there and did not understand anything. To the archive." So the book, which revealed in a small combat episode those fundamental flaws in the combat training of troops and officers, which were also revealed in the Second World War, turned out to be hidden from the officer corps.

Stern was an influential figure, not least because of his closeness to Voroshilov, to whom he had been aide-de-camp for a long time. Grigorenko and others note the humanity of Stern, who worked, and often successfully, for the officers sentenced to death. Zhukov's rapid rise was hardly to his liking. At the December meeting, Stern spoke critically of the report of Zhukov, then still commander of the Kyiv district. Was the appointment of General Stern in the Air Defense Forces the result of a cunning maneuver by Zhu

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dude, it's impossible to say. One fact is beyond doubt. For the arrest of Stern, the NKVD required the consent of People's Commissar Tymoshenko. At the same time, he could ask Zhukov for advice, and if so, then the latter's answer was predictable. Tymoshenko's role remains unclear. The People's Commissar knew Stern, he commanded his army during the Finnish war. Nothing is heard of their skirmishes. What often happened during the purges could happen. Beria insisted on the arrest of Stern, and Timoshenko did not have the courage to defend the general. A similar situation took place with Voroshilov and Yezhov.

Landing Smushkevich definitely on the conscience of Zhukov, the famous pilot was his assistant in aviation. In his memoirs, Zhukov speaks warmly of Smushkevich, but does not say a word about his arrest - this is significant.

On June 8, Major General of Aviation A.A. was arrested. Levin, who for a long time headed the Department of Military Educational Institutions of the Air Force. In the early 1930s Levin, being head of the Stalingrad school of military pilots, taught Alksnis, head of the Air Force, to fly. From the beginning of 194, Levin was deputy commander of the Air Force of the Leningrad Military District.

In May and early June, they took the Assistant Inspector General of the Air Force, Major General Nikolai Vasilchenko, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Major General Pavel Yusupov, Commander of the Air Force of the Far Eastern Front, Lieutenant General Konstantin Gusev, Deputy Commander of the Air Force of the Baltic Military District, General Lieutenant Pavel Alekseev, Head of the Air Force Research Institute, Major General Alexander Filin, as well as other aviation technicians: Colonel [Georgy Shevchenko, military engineers | ranks of Grigory Mikhno, Sergei Onisko and Pyotr Nikonov.

On June 19, it was the turn of the commander of the Baltic Special Military District, Colonel-General Alexander Loktionov. According to all reports, this arrest is related to aviation: from December 1937 to November 1939, Loktionov was deputy people's commissar for the Air Force, then he commanded the troops that occupied the Baltic states in 1940.

With the beginning of the war, the ardor of the patriots from Lubyanka did not diminish at all, rather the opposite. Looks like they already had a conspiracy script in place by then. There is an interesting story about how Meretskov was arrested. On June 21, People's Commissar Tymoshenko sent him to Lenin

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city "as a representative of the High Command in the Leningrad Military District" in case of war. On the 23rd he received an urgent call to return to Moscow. On the same day, he was appointed permanent adviser to the newly created Headquarters of the High Command. On June 24, shortly after his return, he was arrested. It is clear that Timoshenko found out about the intentions of the authorities at the last minute, otherwise he would not have included the enemy of the people in the order to create the Headquarters. Whether Beria had Stalin's sanction for the arrest of Meretskov and some others in the first days of the war is a big question. It is very possible that it was not, because the leader retired to the Kuntsevo dacha and almost did not take part in business.

The landings, meanwhile, were in full swing. On June 24, three lieutenant generals were dragged to the Lubyanka — the recent head of the Air Force Pavel Rychagov, the head of the Military Academy of Air Force command and navigators Fyodor Arzhenukhin, the commander of the Air Force of the Kiev Regional Military District Hero of the Soviet Union Yevgeny Ptukhin. On June 26, they took away the commander of the Air Force of the Baltic OVO, Major General Aleksey Ionov, a day later, Ivan Proskurov, whom we know, and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Major General Pavel Volodin, the very one to whom the Commissar announced a reprimand for the Yu-52 flight. Proskurov's accusation read:

"..involved in a conspiratorial anti-Soviet organization, on the instructions of which he carried out hostile work to weaken the military power of the USSR.

Of course, we could not list all those arrested. The landings in the Red Army were in full swing even after the end of June, but they were connected with military operations: Stalin and his henchmen desperately needed scapegoats for catastrophic failures at the front. About it - in its place. For now, let's dwell on the scenario of a large army conspiracy concocted in the Lubyanka.

The script was simple. Deputy People's Commissar Meretskov, People's Commissar Vannikov, Air Defense Chief Shtern, as well as prominent figures of military aviation Smushkevich, Rychagov, Loktionov, Proskurov, Sakrier, Taubin, Arzhenukhin, gunners Savchenko and Sklizkov and others of lower rank who were part of the

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spy group, plotted and prepared a military coup against Stalin.

Who ordered the exposure of this conspiracy, Stalin or Beria, we do not know. It is known that the investigation was conducted by the highest ranks of the bodies - the head of the NKGB Vsevolod Merkulov, the head of the investigation department Lev Vlodzimirsky. Here is what Lev Shvartsman, an active participant in the events, said when he was interrogated in the mid-fifties:

"Physical methods of influence were applied to Meretskov first by high officials Merkulov and Vlodzimirsky, and then by me with investigators Zimenkov and Sorokin. He was beaten with rubber sticks. Before his arrest, Meretskov had testimonies from more than 40 witnesses that he was a participant in a military conspiracy."

Colonel Shvartsman, a journalist by profession, was one of the most talented screenwriters of the NKVD. According to Sudoplatov, Shvartsman himself, as a rule, did not interrogate, but mainly edited falsified testimonies torn from prisoners. In this case, he personally took part in the beatings, because he had "such a high order that is not discussed."

Usually the Chekists got their way. The defendants could not stand it and signed what was slipped to them. Smushkevich, for example, had bandages from a recent operation. Loktionov showed incredible resilience. Here is the testimony of investigator Semenov:

"I personally saw how brutally they beat Meretskov and Loktionov during the investigation. They not only moaned, but simply roared in pain... they acted especially brutally with Stern. There was no place left on it. At each interrogation, he lost consciousness several times..." Loktionov was severely beaten, covered in blood, and his appearance had an effect on Meretskov, who denounced him. Loktionov refused, and Vlodzimirsky, Shvartsman and Rhodes continued to beat him in turn and together in front of Meretskov, who urged Loktionov to sign whatever they wanted from him. Loktionov roared in pain, rolled on the floor, but did not agree.

Meretskov, it is worth noting, was taken earlier, in 1937. Therefore, he wanted to avoid beatings and get a bullet in
back of the head."

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Vannikov was subjected to equally convincing methods of interrogation, but then Stalin, apparently, caught himself. Here is how Vannikov himself talks about this (see the article by Israel Podrabinek in the Kaskad online newspaper):

"[On July 7, 1941, an investigator entered the solitary cell at Lubyanka and, addressing Vannikov by his first and last name for the first time, said:

— Boris Lvovich, if a war with Germany suddenly broke out and the Germans had a great success at first, where would we be able to evacuate military factories?

After a short pause, he replied:

— I won't be able to answer right away, but I know each of the military factories very well, and in two days I could write how to do it all.

"Excellent," the investigator replied. - I ask you to write everything here.

He handed Vannikov a rather thick gray-bound notebook and several sharpened pencils.

On July 20, with carefully bandaged wounds, dressed in a new suit, Vannikov was taken directly from prison to Stalin. Molotov and Malenkov (according to another version - Beria) were in the office. Vannikov's note lay in front of Stalin, it was evident that he had worked on it. Stalin said: "Your note is an excellent document. You were right in many ways. We made a mistake... And the scoundrels slandered you." Then he added: "This plan must be carried out... You, Comrade Vannikov. Don't waste time, get started."

Vannikov objected: "I have been declared an enemy of the people. Who will carry out my orders?" Stalin summoned Poskrebyshev and dictated the text of the following certificate, which he handed to Vannikov:

State Defense Committee. July 20, 1941. No. 1021.

Certificate.

The State Defense Committee certifies that Com. VANNIKOV Boris Lvovich was temporarily arrested by the NKGB, as it is now clear, due to a misunderstanding and that Comrade. B. L. Vannikov is now considered fully rehabilitated.

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Tov. B. L. Vannikov By a decree of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, he was appointed Deputy People's Commissar for Armaments and, by order of the State Defense Committee, must immediately begin work as Deputy People's Commissar for Armaments.

Chairman of the State Defense Committee I. Stalin "

Handing this certificate to Vannikov, Stalin said: "There are misunderstandings, unfortunately. I, too, was in prison, Comrade Vannikov." Vannikov replied: "You were sitting with your enemies, ah, yours." Stalin did not like the remark: "Now is not the time to hold grudges, we have to work."

Of course, the words of the leader were not meant to be taken literally. The scoundrels who slandered the people's commissar continued to work in their offices. Vannikov was released because he was needed. The Nazis also had their useful Jews. Stalin's hypocrisy is even better seen in the case of Meretskov. The general signed everything, but then there was a hitch - no trial, no reprisals. He decided to write a petition to the leader:

"To the Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of the Soviet Union (B) Stalin I.V.

In a tense time for our country, when every citizen is required to devote himself completely to the defense of the Motherland, I, having some military practice, am isolated and cannot take part in the liberation of our Motherland from enemy invasions. Previously working in responsible positions, I always carried out your instructions conscientiously and with full effort.

I ask you once again to entrust me, to let me go to the front and in any work that you find it possible to give me, to prove my devotion to you and the Motherland.

I have been preparing for a war with the Germans for a long time, I want to fight them, I despise them for their brazen attack on our country, give me the opportunity to fight, I will take revenge on them to my last opportunity, I will not spare myself to the last drop of blood, boo-Do fight until the complete annihilation of the enemy. I will take all measures to be useful for you, for the army and for our country.

whom the people. 28.USh.-41 K. Meretskov.

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Once upon a time in Rus' it was a standard form: Tsar-father! Your servant Kirilka Meretskov beats you with his forehead. Ekaterina P banned the use of the word slave in state papers. Stalin, on the contrary, was pleased that in the mind of Army General Meretskov he stood ahead of the Motherland. The fate of the general, like any citizen of the world's first state of working peasants, was in the hands of the dictator, depended on his willfulness of Troyekurov: if I wanted, I would be executed; if I wanted, I would be pardoned. The proletarian leader father decided to be merciful. On September 8, Meretskov was put on a new uniform and taken to Stalin's office, who, with a paternal smirk, inquired about the general's health, after which he sent him to the front as a representative of the Headquarters ... In Meretskov's memoirs, published in 1968 i.e. after the XX Congress, nothing was said about the arrest. Apparently, it was too painful to remember the bullying and torment. Or embarrassing.

Although Meretskov, the head of the military conspiracy, was released, all his accomplices remained behind bars. In the dialectical logic of the Soviet regime, in what Orwell called doublethink, this was normal:

"..to adhere simultaneously to two opposing opinions, realizing that one excludes the other, and to be convinced of both; kill logic with logic...

Of course, nothing prevented Stalin from releasing Stern, or Proskurov, or any participant in the imaginary conspiracy. [] why he did not do this with an acute shortage of command personnel, we do not know. Perhaps because none of them wrote him servile petitions ...

In the days of the Moscow panic in October 1941, Beria and the NKVD worked tirelessly. On the 16th, about 300 people were shot, including military men in high ranks - generals N.A. Klich, S.A. Chernykh, S.M. Mishchenko, R.Yu. Klyavinsha, A.N. Krustynsha, A.I. Dalberg and A.Ya. Dannebergs. They say there were no funds to evacuate them. Pavlenko (p. 274) calls this order criminal: "In the combat areas near Moscow at that time, lieutenants commanded the regiments." On the same day, Nina Uborevich and Nina Tukhachevskaya were executed (Blum Gamarnik and Ekaterina Kork were shot in July). The executed were buried near the Kommunarka state farm near Moscow. When, after 10 years, I began to attend Kommunarskaya secondary school, we

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they had no idea that in the neighborhood there was a terrible place reserved for the burial of victims of the NKVD.

On October 17, a group of twenty especially important enemies was taken from Moscow to Kuibyshev. It included participants in the military conspiracy known to us and some civilians. The next day, Beria's order flew after him - to shoot him without trial. This happened on October 28 in the village of Barbysh near Kuibyshev. The task of the People's Commissar was carried out by the glorious security officers senior major, later major general, Bashtakov (participant in the Katyn action), major Rhodes and senior lieutenant Semenikhin.

Saved document:

"Act

Kuibyshev. 1941, October 28th day.

We, the undersigned, in accordance with the order of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR, the General Commissar of State Security Comrade. L.P. Beria dated [October 8, 1941, No. 2756/B, carried out the sentence of VMN — execution by firing squad against the following 20 convicts: G.M. Stern, A.D. Loktionov, Ya.V. Smushkevich, G.K. Savchenko, [J.V. Rychagov, I.F. Sakrier, I.I. Zasosov, P.S. Volodin, I.I. Proskurov, S.O. Sklizkov, F.K. Arzhenukhin, M.M. Kayukov, M.N. Sobornov, Ya.A. Taubin, D.A. Rozov, 3.1. Rozova-Egorova, F.I. Goloshchekin, D.A. Bulatov, M.P. Nesterenko, A.I. Fibikh (Savchenko).

Senior Major of State Security Bashtakov Major of State Security of Rhodes.

Of the 20 shot, 15 were part of a military conspiracy, most do not need to be introduced. There were four Heroes in the group — Stern, Rychagov, Proskurov, Smushkevich; the latter was awarded this title twice. According to military ranks, there was such a picture: 2 colonel-generals - Stern, Loktionov; 4 Lieutenant General - Arzhenukhin, Proskurov, Rychagov, Smushkevich; | divining engineer - Sacrier; 3 Major Generals - Deputy Head of the Artillery Directorate Kayukov, Savchenko, Volodin; 2 brig-engineers — Head of the Small Arms Department of the GAU RKKA Sklizkov, Head of the Experimental Design Bureau of the People's Commissariat of Armaments Sobornov; | colonel - chairman of the Artillery Komi

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theta Hickey; | the major is the well-known pilot Maria Nesterenko, Rychagov's wife. One conspirator did not have a military rank - the head of the Special Design Bureau of the People's Commissariat for Armaments, Taubin. Of the five civilians, Liebig was shot as the wife of General Savchenko; Philip Goloshchekin, by the way, being in 1918 the commissar of the Ural military district, took part in the execution of the royal family. Eliminated it for other reasons. It seems that the files of these executed have not been preserved; they may have been destroyed in the 1960s.

The circle of those arrested in the case of a conspiracy in the Red Army was not exhausted by those who were shot near Kuibyshev, and Beria decided to draw a line. On January 29, 1942, he sent Stalin a list of 46 arrested persons, "registered for the NKVD of the USSR." Among them were 17 generals and several leaders of the defense industry. A resolution followed: "Shoot all those named on the list. I. Stalin. February 13, 1942. A special meeting of the NKVD of the USSR formalized the massacre. The list included lieutenant generals of aviation [1.A. Alekseeva, K.M. Guseva, E.S. Ptukhina, P.I. Pumpura, lieutenant general of the technical troops N.I. Trubetskoy, Lieutenant General P.S. Klenova, I.V. Selivanova, Major General of Aviation A.P. Ionova, N.A. Laskina, A.A. Levina, A.I. Filina, E.G. Mine, P.P. Yusupov, Major General of Tank Troops N.D. Goltsev, Major General A.N. De Lazari, M.I. Petrov, Assistant Inspector General of the Air Force Divisional Commander N.N. Vasilchenko, senior officials of the NKAP and the NKB, headed by the People's Commissar for Ammunition I.P. Sergeev.

Most of those executed were connected to notorious military conspiracies, most but not all. Trubetskoy, the head of military communications, for example, was shot for traffic jams on the railways. The list included three Heroes of the Soviet Union - Pumpur, Mine and Ptukhin, but there were also persons from another category. Numbers 42-46 were those arrested who were accused of fraud. According to the document, four posed as Heroes of the Soviet Union, one as a commander of the Red Army; everyone confessed.

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The verdict against all 46 was carried out on 23 February. God knows why the NKVD needed such symbols.

As we can see, on the eve of the war, Stalin and his party continued what they started in 1937-1938. mass destruction of personnel of the Red Army and the defense industry. At the same time, they were not Hitler's accomplices, not at all. For Stalin and his henchmen, above all was their unlimited power, which they used as terrorists or bandits. It's better to say Orwell about it impossible:

“Power is not a means; she is the target. A dictatorship is not established to guard the revolution; a revolution is made in order to establish a dictatorship. The purpose of repression is repression. The purpose of torture is torture. The purpose of power is power.

They did not know how to distinguish honest workers from enemies and saw sabotage where most often there was a centuries-old Russian guild, as well as the ignorance and unreasonable zeal of uncultured nominees. [To their extreme ignorance, they immediately qualified any failures and breakdowns as the work of ubiquitous spies and pests, and all difficulties were resolved by executions. From the very beginning, the Bolsheviks were supporters of terror, only, unlike the Narodnaya Volya and the Social Revolutionaries, they preferred it in its mass incarnation. Until the very end, they always had the urge to intimidate - not only the population, but also their party comrades.

One cannot escape the impression that Stalin and his henchmen often behaved like a gang of criminals. Many of them escaped punishment. The Communist Party once acknowledged the criminal nature of the Stalinist leadership, but belatedly and with timid patter. The resolution of the 20th Congress (1961) refers to the removal of Stalin's body from the Mausoleum for "crimes against the party and the state." It didn't go any further than this.

WAR. 1941

(continuation)

FORCES OF THE PARTIES

Command structure in the Soviet-German theater

presented in the table:

Germany

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oiiiiitniitnitnitniouchinivnilonochizvniotivioiziochivavziozchoniociochizaizirtosirazozozizzhilipizioiziovonozniinfluence

{ | Army of Norway | (Colonel General Nicholas

von Falkenhorst) } : Finnish army

: Army Group "North" 4 , (Field Marshal Wilhelm von

| Leeb) | 16th and 18th armies | 4th Panzer Group

| Army Guppa "Center"

(Field Marshal Fedor von Bock) 4th and 9th Army | 2nd and 3rd tank groups

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Army Group South (Field Marshal Gerd von Run-: Stedt)

: 6th, 10th and 17th armies

} 3rd and 4th Romanian armies

| [-I tank group

northern front

(Colonel-General M.M. Popov) 7th, 14th and 23rd armies of the 1st [0th mechanized corps North-Western Front (Colonel-General F.I. Kuznetsov) 8th, 11th and 28th (400 km east of the border) armies of the 3rd and 12th mechanized corps e-th airborne corps Western Front (general of the army D.G. Pavlov) 3rd, 4th, 10th and 13th armies 6, 11, [3, 14, 17th and 20th mechanized corps 4th airborne corps

Western NT (Colonel-General M.P. Kirponos) 5th, 6th, 12th and 26th Armies 4th, 8th, 9th, 15th, 16th, 19th, 22nd and 24th Mechanized Corps 1st Airborne Corps

Southern Front (formed June 25, 1941;

Army General I.V. Tyulenev) 9th and 18th Army

2nd 18th mechanized corps

3rd Airborne Corps Reserve Stavka VGK

16th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd and 24th armies

5th, 7th, 25th and 26th mechanized corps

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It is worth saying a few words about organizational structures, because the terms army, corps, division, brigade, etc. did not mean exactly the same thing in [Germany and the USSR (see Ch[an & Noise, pp. 29-30, 34-8).`

The tank division of the Wehrmacht in 1941 included 2 or 3 tank battalions; according to the state, the division was supposed to have from 150 to 202 tanks; the average number of serviceable ones was 125. In addition, there were 5 motorized infantry battalions in a tank division, 4 of them had trucks or, rarely, armored personnel carriers, and one had motorcycles. The tank division also included: reconnaissance and engineer battalions, three artillery battalions, communications, anti-tank and anti-aircraft units. The total number of personnel is about 17 thousand people.

The motorized infantry division was somewhat smaller in size. It included one tank battalion, 7 motorized infantry battalions, and 3-4 artillery battalions.

In 1941, the motorized (tank) corps included two tank and one motorized infantry division. In turn, 2-4 such corps formed a tank group. Later these groups were transformed into tank armies. At the same time, in most cases, field infantry corps were included in their composition.

A field infantry division, [5,000 men, consisted of three regiments of three battalions each, plus four horse-drawn artillery regiments: a total of [5,000 men. The main anti-tank weapons remained 37-mm guns, which turned out to be unusable already in 1940. The real force was only medium-caliber artillery battalions, which included 100-mm or 105-mm guns, as well as the famous 88-mm anti-aircraft guns, proved to be very effective against tanks.

There were no tank groups or armies in the Red Army in 1941. The largest motorized formation was a mechanized corps: two tank divisions, each with 10,940 men and 375 tanks, two tank regiments, one motorized infantry regiment, as well as anti-aircraft, reconnaissance, sapper, anti-tank and communications battalions. In addition, such a corps included a division

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motorized infantry and supply units; approved staff - 30,080 people. The mechanized corps were scattered over the garrisons, their equipment with military equipment varied greatly. By the beginning of the war, the majority was in the formative stage.

The Soviet infantry formations were reminiscent of the German ones in appearance: an infantry (rifle) division had a regular strength of [14,483 people: three regiments of three battalions each, plus two artillery regiments and support services. Three rifle divisions made up a rifle corps; two or three rifle corps and one mechanized corps usually formed a combined arms army. In practice, these armies were usually understaffed, most divisions in them had about 8 thousand people - even before the start of the war.

To implement the Barbarossa plan, the command of the ground forces (Obegkottapao aeg Neegez, hereinafter - OKH) allocated 148 divisions, including 19 tank and 15 motorized. The total number - 3 million 50 thousand people, 75% of the German army (71etke, Egot Mosso... p. 7). The tank division consisted of [7 thousand people and 125 tanks, in the motorized division, respectively, 14 thousand and 50. The infantry in these divisions moved on trucks. The field (infantry) division consisted of 14 thousand people, the transport was mainly horse-drawn.

Now about the contribution of Germany's allies. Norway deployed 4 German divisions with a total number of 67 thousand in Northern Finland; the Finns fielded 14 divisions and three brigades (500,000); the Romanians sent 150 thousand troops, formed into 14 divisions, and 3 brigades - all incomplete.

In fact, approximately 3.5 million people took part in the fighting in the first week of July. As for equipment, before the start of the operation, the German command on the Eastern Front had at its disposal 3,350 tanks, 7,184 artillery pieces, 2,770 aircraft, 600,000 cars and trucks, and 625,000 horses.

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Ground forces

The German ground forces were organized into three army groups, each of which was assigned its own sector or direction. Army Group North, commanded by Field Marshal Wilhelm von Leeb, was to advance from East Prussia through the Baltic to Leningrad. Army Group Center, Field Marshal Fedor von Bock, was to go in the direction of Moscow through Minsk and Smolensk. Army Group South, Field Marshal Gerd von Runstedt, was assigned a sector between the Pinsk (Pripyat) swamps and the Black Sea with the task of attacking Kiev and the line of the river. Dnieper.

In total, there were 7 German field armies and 4 tank groups on the Eastern Front, later renamed tank armies. They were distributed as follows: Army Group North - 16th and 18th Armies and 4th Panzer Group; group "Center" - 4th and 9th armies, 2nd and 3rd tank groups; group "South" - 6th, 11th, 17th armies and 1st tank group.

There were 5 military districts on the western border of the USSR: Leningradsky, Baltic Special, Western Special, Kiev Special and Odessa. Special districts in the event of war automatically became fronts, the rest required additional troops. In accordance with this plan, on June 22, four fronts were formed: the Northern (based on the Leningrad District) consisting of 3 armies, commander - Lieutenant General M.M. Popov; North-Western (based on the Baltic District), 3 armies, Colonel General F.I. Kuznetsov, who replaced Loktionov, who was arrested on the eve of the war; South-

Western (on the basis of the Kyiv district), 4 armies, Colonel General M.P. Kirponos; Western, 4 armies, army general D.G. Pavlov. A few days after the start of hostilities, the Southern Front was created on the basis of the Odessa District, headed by General of the Army I.V. Tyulenin, who brought with him the headquarters and governing bodies of the Moscow Military District. This front initially had one army, then another one was formed from the divisions transferred by Kirponos. Of these five commanders, two died shortly after the start of the war (Kirponos and Pavlov, according to

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the last one was shot), the rest continued to fight, but did not get any laurels.

Most Soviet sources give the number of troops in the western districts at about 2.9 million people, consisting of 170 divisions and 2 brigades. The specified number of divisions includes all types - rifle, cavalry, tank and motorized, but it is impossible to say how many of which there were. Most of the divisions were not fully equipped. True, at the beginning of July the number of divisions increased to 212, including 90 full strength (IletKe, Egot Mozsol... r. 13).

A handwritten note by Deputy Chief of the General Staff Vatutin, found in the archives of the Ministry of Defense, contains such data:

Total in the USSR | Western

|

borders

: Total number of divisions 218

, In tch. rifle 198 142

, tank 47 |

A. = k. |

mechanized 23 cavalry 6

, Howitzer artillery regiments

Artillery regiments RGK a 53

, Airborne Corps

Anti-tank brigades

In total, there were 303 divisions in the USSR, including: rifle - 198, tank - 61, mechanized - 31, cavalry - 13; plus 94 howitzer artillery regiments, 74 RGK artillery regiments, 5 airborne corps, and 10 anti-tank brigades. For deployment on the western borders, the fronts (without formations located in the Crimea) had 186 divisions, including: rifle - 120, tank - 40, mechanized - 20, cavalry - 6, artillery regiments of the RGK - 53, VDK - 5, anti-tank brigades - 10.

There were a huge number of tanks in the Red Army - up to 24 thousand, but most of them were light and outdated. There were approximately 1,800 medium and heavy tanks in the western districts, of which 1,475 were T-34s and KVs. There were also about 35 thousand artillery

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Russian guns and 1,540 new types of aircraft, not counting a significant number of obsolete ones.

The problem of the correlation of forces between the USSR and Germany in June 1941 became political from the very beginning and for this reason is covered with a dense layer of lies. For the first couple of decades after the war, specific statistics were not published at all. Propaganda got off by repeating the formulas invented by Stalin that in the summer of 1941 the Red Army was short of tanks and aircraft. Later, the presentation of disinformation became more sophisticated. Here is how Pavlenko describes it (p. 209):

"All tanks and aircraft were counted from the enemy, and only new types of this equipment were taken from us. The same was done when counting the personnel of the parties. On our part, only the personnel of the border districts were taken into account, i.e. the forces of the first strategic echelon, while the enemy has all the forces, including strategic reserves".

The solid work "50 Years of the Armed Forces of the USSR", published in 1969, presented the following picture on page 252:

"In general, the enemy outnumbered our troops by 1.8 times in the number of personnel, by 1.5 times in medium and heavy tanks, by 3.3 times in combat aircraft of new types, in guns and mortars by 1.5 times. 1.35 times."

In the words of Pavlenko, "these falsified data still roam from one work to another." Only in the late 1980s did the first objective reports appear in the Soviet press. Here is what A. Yakushevsky wrote (VIZh, 1989, No. 5, p. 74):

"In the first strategic echelon, the size of the armed forces [of Germany and the Soviet Union was approximately equal. The superiority of aircraft and tanks was on the side of the USSR. Even in the number of new heavy and medium tanks, the Soviet troops outnumbered the German fascists.

Alas, the quantitative characteristics were only part of the description of what happened. Everything else was in favor of the Wehrmacht. Pavlenko (p. 210):

“So, by the beginning of the war, there were more than enough troops and military equipment in the western border districts to repel the first strike. But, unfortunately, the troops, due to the low professionalism of command personnel, find

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were in an unsatisfactory condition. In addition, they were in an extremely disadvantageous grouping ... ”

The incompetence of the command applied to all its levels, starting from the very top.

Armor is strong...

In 1917, the British modern war theorist Fuller predicted: "Other things being equal, the most mobile side should win." This consideration was definitely shared by the most far-sighted militaries in many countries, primarily in England, in Germany and in the USSR. I have no opportunity to delve into the tank topic, it is too extensive. But to understand the material of this book, the reader needs to know about the tanks of the belligerents.

When the Germans encountered the T-34 tank in the autumn of 1941, they discovered that it had advantages over the German vehicles: powerful anti-ballistic armor, good mobility, and a cannon with a sufficient muzzle velocity. The T-34 turret was streamlined, and the armor plates in the hull had large angles of inclination relative to the vertical. These innovations influenced the contours of the "panther" and "royal tiger".

In battle, the new Soviet tank easily pierced any German opponent. At the same time, neither the German tank guns nor their standard 37 mm anti-tank guns could penetrate the frontal armor of the T-34. The T-34 engine was much more powerful than German tank engines.

A little help. The prototype of the 480-horsepower U-2 diesel engine, which was installed on the T-34 tanks, as well as, with minor modifications, on the KV, IS, T-54 and T-55 tanks, was the N! Zsh2a 12U, developed by the Swiss Mark Birkigt at the turn of 1920-1930. The angle of collapse of the cylinders and their diameter are the same. Aviation pedigree is given by an aluminum (silumin) cylinder block, as well as a dry sump lubrication system and a long crankshaft nose necessary for installing a screw. Well, why really waste aluminum on an engine for a 26 ton tank? The answer is simple. In the mid-30s, the USSR acquired a license in France for the production of the N! 5rapo-Z engine, which was U [2. It formed the basis of the M-100 aircraft engine and tank

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vogo U-2. The latter was transferred to diesel, but otherwise the design was changed little. Since the T-34 has long turned into a sacred cow, they are embarrassed to mention it, protecting the glorious past.

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5

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41 | 42.60 48

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Min. armor, mm

34

0 Gun caliber, mm 6] 0 8

300 32 | 38 230/300] 155 | 155

The invasion force had 3,300 tanks, 800 more than during the French campaign, plus 250 assault guns (self-propelled artillery mounts).

Tank division: tank regiment (3 battalions, 160 tanks) and motorized infantry brigade (2 infantry regiments, 2 battalions each). The motorized infantry moved either on ordinary trucks (in combat conditions they dismounted) or in armored personnel carriers, in which they accompanied the tanks in battle.

Tank and motorized infantry divisions were reduced to tank corps (2 tank and 1 motorized infantry divisions). Two or three corps made up a tank group, later - an army (up to 800 tanks, motorized infantry and other weapons).

Crew: total / in the tower

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Military operations began at dawn. At 03:07, the Commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Admiral Oktyabrsky, called the People's Commissariat of Defense w

At 3.30, the chief of staff of the Belorussian district, Klimovskikh, reported on the German air raid. A few minutes later, a similar message came from the chief of staff of the Kyiv district, Purkaev. At 3.40 the commander of the Baltic district F.I. Kuznetsov reported on the bombing of Kaunas and other cities.

People's Commissar Timoshenko ordered Zhukov to contact Stalin. Tom had to call many times until the attendant answered. After some bickering, he went to wake up Stalin...

At 4.10, the Western and Baltic districts reported that German troops had crossed the border of the USSR in their sectors

Stalin still hoped that this was a misunderstanding or a provocation and there would be no war. Having gathered the members of the Politburo, he ordered to call the German embassy. Ambassador Schulenburg asked to receive him; Molotov did it. The Soviet leadership was finally convinced of the reality of the war, but for some time did not know what to do. Zhukov and Timoshenko proposed to give the troops a directive to destroy the invading Germans.

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Pale Stalin allowed. At 7.15 this Directive No. 2 went to the troops. Zhukov does not cite its text, only briefly notes: "But in terms of the balance of forces and the prevailing situation, it turned out to be unrealistic and was not put into practice."

Here is that document:

Directive No. 02

MILITARY COUNCILS LVO, PribOVO, ZAPOVO, KOVO, OdVO

Copy: TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSIONER OF THE NAVY

On June 22, 194 [at 04:00 in the morning, German aviation, without any reason, raided our airfields and cities along the western border and bombarded them.

At the same time, German troops opened artillery fire in different places and crossed our border.

In connection with the unheard-of impudence attack by Germany on the Soviet Union —

I order:

D. Troops to attack the enemy forces with all their strength and means and destroy them in the areas where they have violated the Soviet border.

From now on, until further notice, ground troops will not cross the border.

2. Reconnaissance and combat aviation to establish the places of concentration of enemy aviation and the grouping of its ground forces.

3. With powerful strikes by bomber and ground attack aircraft, destroy aircraft at enemy airfields and bomb the main groupings of his ground forces.

4. Air strikes to the depth of German territory up to 100-150 km.

2. Bomb Koenigsberg and Memel.

6. Do not make any raids on the territory of Finland and Romania until special instructions.

Tymoshenko Malenkov

Zhukov 22.6.4[7.15

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The order was drawn up in a hurry and after a sleepless night, but even taking into account these extenuating circumstances, it raises many perplexed questions. Why, in response to an attack of unheard-of arrogance, are troops forbidden to cross into enemy territory? After all, war has already been declared. In addition, aircraft are sent to bomb Memel and Koenigsberg, as well as "to destroy aircraft at enemy airfields and bomb the main groupings of his ground forces." You might think that tt. Timoshenko, Malenkov and Zhukov considered the prescribed raid as an event within the framework of the Soviet-German Treaty of Friendship and Border, signed quite recently and not yet terminated. Not to mention the fact that they simply did not know the state of the Soviet troops, who at that time were in a state of confusion and even panic. To justify them, one can assume - with a probability close to 100% - that the prohibition to cross the border was written in by order of Stalin. The leader still hoped for a miracle, for his Peace of Brest. They began to test the ground with the Japanese: could they take on the role of intermediaries. Stalin, who by that time was the head of the government, refused to speak on the radio. This was done at 12.30 pm People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Molotov. He ended with the words:

"Our cause is right. The enemy will be defeated. Victory will be ours".

They say that these last phrases belong to Stalin. Regardless of authorship, they sounded like a spell in the face of an avalanche. Marshal Kulik, when he was awakened at dawn on the 22nd, said: "I did not plan a war this year."

At 2 pm, finally, Directive No. 03 was drawn up, which allowed the troops to cross the State Border of the USSR - there is no need that the Red Army retreated almost everywhere.

Directive No. 03

[. The enemy, inflicting blows from the Suwalka ledge on Olita and from the Zamostye region on the Vladimir-Volynsky, Radzekhov front, auxiliary blows in the directions of Tilsit, Siauliai and Sedlec, Volkovysk, during 22.6, having suffered heavy losses, achieved little success on the indicated directions.

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On the remaining sections of the state border with Germany and on the entire state border with Romania, enemy attacks were repulsed with heavy losses for him.

2. The next task for 23-24.6 I put:

a) encircle and destroy the Suwalki grouping of the enemy with concentric concentrated strikes by the troops of the North-Western and Western Fronts and capture the Suwalki area by the end of 24.6;

6) with powerful concentric strikes by mechanized corps, all aviation of the South-Western Front and other troops of 5th and 6bA, encircle and destroy the enemy's grip, advancing in the direction of Vladimir-Volynsky, Brody. By the end of June 24, capture the Lublin region.

3. I ORDER:

a) The armies of the Northern Front continue to provide a solid cover for the state border.

The border on the left is the old one.

6) The armies of the North-Western Front, firmly holding the coast of the Baltic Sea, deliver a powerful counterattack from the Kaunas area to the flank and rear of the enemy's Suwalki grouping, destroy it in cooperation with the Western Front and, by the end of 24.6, capture the Suwalki area .

The border on the left is the old one.

c) The armies of the Western Front, holding back the enemy in the Warsaw direction, launch a powerful counterattack with forces of at least two mechanized corps and aviation in the flank and rear of the enemy's Suwalka grouping, destroy it together with the North-Western Front and, by the end of 24.6, capture the Suwalki area.

The border on the left is the old one.

d) Armies of the Southwestern Front, firmly holding the border with Hungary, with concentric strikes in the general direction on Lublin by forces of 5 and BA, at least five mechanized corps and all aviation of the front, encircle and destroy the enemy grouping advancing on the front Vladimir-Volynsky, Krystynopol, by the end of 26.6 capture the area of Lublin. Securely provide for yourself from the Krakow direction.

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e) To the armies of the Southern Front to prevent the enemy from invading our territory. When the enemy tries to strike in the Chernivtsi direction or force the river. Prut and Danube with powerful flank strikes of ground forces in cooperation with aviation to destroy it; two mechanized corps on the night of 23.6 concentrate in the area of Chisinau and forests northwest of Chisinau.

4. On the front from the Baltic Sea to the border with Hungary, I allow the crossing of the state border and actions, regardless of the state border.

2. Aviation of the High Command:

a) support the North-Western Front with one sortie of the 1st Av. bldg. DD and the Western Front in one sortie on the 8th Av. bldg. DD for the period of their fulfillment of the task of defeating the enemy's Suwalka grouping;

6) include the 18th air division of the DD in the Southwestern Front and support the Southwestern Front with one sortie of the 2nd av. corps DD for the period of their mission to defeat the enemy's Lublin grouping;

c) 4th Av. leave the DD corps at my disposal in readiness to assist the main grouping of the Southwestern Front and part of the forces of the Black Sea Fleet.

People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR Marshal of the Soviet Union Tymoshenko

Member of the Main Military Council Malenkov Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army General of the Army Zhukov.

The first phrase with two participial turns betrays Stalin's hand. I'm not talking about the blatant distortion of facts. By the end of the day on the 22nd, it became clear that there would be no peace at Brest-Litovsk, so the troops were ordered to go on the offensive. This surreal order shows that Moscow has lost contact with the fronts. Zhukov in his memoirs claims that he flew to Cyrus diarrhea in Ternopil, where Vatutin acquainted him with Directive No. 03 by phone; he reluctantly agreed to be signed. It is not necessary to believe in it.

How was it possible to tell the stunned troops that the enemy had achieved little success and suffered great losses?

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ri? What is it - hopeless arrogance or masterful irony? Stalin could remember Averchenko's passage about how the Russians were defeated and the French were victorious. I am not ready to answer such questions.

The behavior of the Soviet leaders on this day shows their complete unpreparedness for the outbreak of war - psychological, administrative, military, and any other. The blame for this lies primarily with Stalin. It was he, the sovereign master and dictator, who constantly inspired his henchmen that there would be no war this year. It was on his orders that the TASS Statement was released, which disorientated the authorities, army and civilians.

The troops in the border districts were taken by surprise. This tactical surprise, the best of any argument, refutes the official lie about the readiness of the Red Army to repel an attack. Modern fabrications about a preemptive strike supposedly being prepared in July are also crumbling to dust. The helplessness and chaos that prevailed in the first days of the war would not have been possible in the troops, which are about to launch an offensive.

The Germans listened on the radio to the address of their Fuhrer, which was read by Goebbels:

"German people! At this moment, a campaign begins that can be compared with the greatest events of its kind in history. Today, in accordance with my decision, the fate of the Reich and the nation is once again in the hands of our soldiers."

On the same day, Italy and Romania declared war on the USSR, on June 26 Finland did the same, on the 27th - Hungary and on the 28th - Albania.

DISASTER OF THE FIRST DAYS

Hostilities began at the first glimmer of day on Sunday 22 June. Even before the German troops crossed the Soviet border between 3 and 3.30 in the morning, artillery bombardment of the garrisons began. Soviet ports from Leningrad to Izmail were subjected to heavy bombardment: Kaunas (Kovno), Minsk, Rovno, Odessa, Sevastopol and Liepaja (Libau). After that, the invasion of German troops began in a vast area from the Baltic to Hungary. Together with

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troops, and often in front of them, numerous sabotage groups crossed the border, with the aim of damaging communication lines and setting up ambushes on the roads. Among the saboteurs there were a considerable number of Ukrainians and Lithuanians who were familiar with the conditions of the area.

The first blow was devastating. By noon on the 22nd, almost a quarter of the Soviet air fleet had been destroyed, by the end of the day - almost half. According to German data, by noon the Luftwaffe had bombed more than 60 airfields and destroyed 800 Soviet planes, losing only 10 (Seafüp, Kus50-Oerman Vag, p. 98). The border troops in many places put up fierce resistance, but could not stop the invasion. The garrisoned army units were taken by surprise. Due to communication breakdown and confusion, the resistance was fragmented and ineffective. The directive of the center at 7.15 am hardly helped, ordering the ground units not to cross the border with Germany, and the aviation not to go deeper into enemy territory for more than 150 km.

Despite all this, by the end of the day the General Staff and the People's Commissariat of Defense believed that the situation had stabilized; at least that's what they said in Directive 03:

"The enemy, having delivered strikes from the Suvalkinsky ledge to Olita and from the Zamostye region on the Vladimir-Volynsky, Radzekhov front, auxiliary strikes in the directions of Tilsit, Siauliai and Sedlec, Volkovysk, during 22.6, having suffered heavy losses, achieved little success in these directions.

On the remaining sections of the state border with Germany and on the entire state border with Romania, enemy attacks were repulsed with heavy losses for him.

It was the collapse of military doctrine and military leadership, a retribution for the political course of the past two years.

Western front in the spotlight

A stunning German attack on June 22 was dealt along the entire front, but the worst hit was the Western Special Military District, commanded by General of the Army Pavlov. The district automatically turned into a front with the same name (a special label spoke about this).

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Dmitry Pavlov made a dizzying career before the war - thanks to participation in the Spanish war, but mainly because of the vacuum created by the purges. He started in 1919 as a cadet of command staff courses, served in the cavalry, and transferred to tank troops. Upon his return from Spain, forty-year-old brigade commander Pavlov was showered with honors and favors: Hero of the Soviet Union, commander (with a jump through the rank), head of the Armored Directorate of the Red Army, colonel general, army general, commander of a key district. He was somewhat recklessly proclaimed "Soviet Guderian." Pavlov soared high in the army hierarchy, but at the same time, he very likely remained with the horizons of a brigade commander. This, in particular, is evidenced by his recommendations on the disbandment of the mechanized corps and by no means brilliant results at the staff games in early 1941. Pavlov's further fate, however, was determined not by his behavior or abilities, but by the order in the country. and the Red Army.

In the last days before the war, Pavlov and his chief of staff, Klimovskikh, repeatedly applied to Moscow for permission to put the troops on alert, but each time they ran into a categorical refusal: Timoshenko and Zhukov did not dare to violate the leader's directive. At dawn on June 22, Pavlova's district was worse than others. Two tank groups attacked him at once; in the north and in the south, the Germans had one such formation each.

Von Bock's Army Group Center acted against the Soviet Western Front, which inflicted two deep blows: in the north, from Suwalki, by the forces of the 9th Strauss field army (12 infantry divisions) and the 3rd tank group Gotha (4 Panzer and 3 motorized divisions) and in the south, from Brest, by the forces of the 4th Army of von Kluge (21 infantry divisions) and the 2nd Guderian Panzer Group (5 panzer, 3 motorized and 1 cavalry divisions). In total, Bock had 634.9 thousand people, 12,500 guns and mortars, and 810 tanks at his disposal. According to other sources, Bok had 750 thousand people (see RezrakKow, p. 124). The Army Group was supported by 1,677 combat aircraft. The tank groups were supposed to drive deep wedges into the defense and close the pincers east of Minsk, providing a double encirclement of Soviet troops in Belarus. The German infantry had to complete the destruction of the enemy.

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Pavlov had considerable forces at his disposal: three covering armies advanced to the border, from north to south: 3rd (V.I. Kuznetsov), 10th (Konstantin Golubev) and 4th (A.A. Korobkov). The rear of the front was 3rd Army (P.M. Filatov). The front included 6 mechanized corps and 1 airborne. On paper, these forces looked quite impressive: 678,000 men, more than 10,000 guns and mortars, about 2,200 tanks and more than 1,500 aircraft. With approximate equality in aircraft, the district was inferior to Army Group Center in people and artillery, but it was one and a half times superior in tanks.

It is now worth mentioning the aggravating circumstances. The 10th Army, stationed in the middle of the Bialystok ledge, was especially vulnerable to encirclement. Here is what Zhukov writes about this:

"This erroneous disposition of troops, admitted in 1940, was not eliminated until the war itself."

Zhukov, then chief of the General Staff, had six months to correct the unprofitable deployment, but did nothing, he did not even stutter about it. In the first echelon of Pavlov there were only 13 rifle divisions. Behind, the 13th Army was in the process of reorganization, re-equipment and formation. The district as a whole consisted of 24 rifle divisions, manned by personnel from 37 to 71% of the wartime staff. The level of combat training was extremely low, the staffs were not put together. The rear services had only 40-45% of the transport assigned to them - clearly not enough for the conduct of hostilities.

All mechanized corps of the district were just being formed, and at the same time extremely slowly, 83% of the available tank fleet were vehicles of obsolete designs that needed to be replaced. Only the 6th mechanized corps of General M. Khatskelevich in the 10th Army consisted of a thousand tanks (of which 352 KV and T-34), the remaining five had a total of about 1200 vehicles, all of the old brands; the 17th mechanized corps had 36 tanks. Ammunition was available, with the important exception of armor-piercing shells. Diesel fuel for new types of tanks was many hundreds of kilometers from Belarus - in Maykop. The vast majority of tankers began to fight without having fired a cannon once before: for a year only 6 shells were relied on.

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car, they were also usually spent before the final check. The rate of training flights was just as meager - less than 10 hours a year per pilot; the Germans - 300-350 hours. The situation with artillery was better: the district received 87% of the guns and mortars assigned to it by the state, however, all mechanized corps, except for the 6th, had very few artillery tractors - from 7 to 30%. All this bore little resemblance to the situation on the eve of the preventive strike.

All the troops of the district were in a garrison position, they had no combat experience, even worse, they were not prepared to repel a sudden massive strike. According to the then Soviet ideas, the war, as in 1914, was to begin with the deployment of troops and relatively light frontier battles. The experience of the German campaigns in Poland and France taught little to the top of the Red Army. To complete the misfortune, on the evening of June 2] German saboteurs were able to seriously damage the wire communication. Moscow lost contact with Pavlov, and he lost contact with his troops.

On the first day, bad news rained down on the commander of the Western Front as if from a cornucopia. He practically remained without air support, 938 aircraft were destroyed on airfields. This outcome was not accidental: the enemy had good information about their location. Before the war, German passenger aircraft were allowed to land on Soviet military airfields. Once this happened in front of the head of combat training of the Red Army Meretskov. [the general was indignant, ordered to prepare a telegram addressed to I.V. Stalin about the wrong actions of the civilian authorities and strongly scolded Pavlov for not informing the people's commissar of defense about such orders.

The next object of the Deputy People's Commissar's wrath was the chief of aviation of the district [hero of the Soviet Union I.I. Kopets:

- What is it you have going on? If a war breaks out and the aviation of the district fails to get out from under the enemy's attack, what will you do then?

Kopets calmly replied:

"Then I'll shoot!"

This was all that Meretskov achieved, the suicidal practice of allowing the Germans to continue anyway. Major General Kopets, we must give him his due, he kept his word, for

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shot on the first day of the war. At 29, he was clearly in the wrong place. His career was a direct result of the purges, three years earlier the dashing pilot had been promoted to captain.

On the first day, the main blow was taken by two flank armies, the 3rd and 4th, which fell under the tank wedges of the Germans. The 10th Army, which stood in the center, did not yet have strong pressure from the enemy; it continued to resist, relying on the Osovet's fortified area.

The commander of the 4th Army, Korobkov, by the evening received an order from Pavlov to counterattack the enemy in the Brest region and restore the border. It was an impossible task, by this time Guderian's 2nd Panzer Group had penetrated 30 km, but there was no choice. At dawn, Korobkov sent the 30th Panzer Division into battle. The Germans were somewhat surprised, but decided to avoid losses. They called the air force and retreated. Yu-88 bombers fell on tank columns in the absence of Soviet aircraft in the sky. Soon the entire battlefield was covered with burning cars, after which Guderian's tanks went on the attack. In a short time, the division lost half of its tanks - 60 out of 120. Only 40 vehicles remained in the 32nd Panzer Division, its commander, Major General Puganov, was killed. Korobkov was soon informed that communication had been established with the front. Korobkov asked Pavlov to send planes, fuel and ammunition, he promised. Both knew it was impossible. Guderian's tanks continued to exert heavy pressure, and by evening the 4th Army began a disorderly retreat; on this day she went a good 80 km. Communication with the front command was again lost. When it was restored, Korobkov himself was not happy, because Pavlov ordered a new counteroffensive. It was he who received Directive No. 03 familiar to us, which ordered the Western Front, "holding back the enemy in the Warsaw direction, to inflict a powerful counterattack by forces of at least two mechanized corps and aviation on the flank and rear of the enemy's Suvalka grouping, destroy it together with the North- Western front and by the end of June 24, capture the Suwalki area.

Korobkov had no choice but to carry out this suicidal order.

On June 23, Panzer Group Gotha easily bypassed the 3rd Army, which was stationed in the Grodno region, and reached Vilnius by evening. In Ka

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Unase (Kovno) On June 23, even before the German troops entered the city, massacres of Jews began, two and a half thousand on the first day. At the call of the newly created Provisional Government of Lithuania, Lithuanian patriots destroyed their Jewish fellow citizens in the most brutal way: they killed them with crowbars, drowned them, pumped them to death with water from pumps...

The next day, Pavlov threw into the counteroffensive a cavalry-mechanized group consisting of the 6th and 11th mechanized corps and formations of the 6th cavalry corps under the command of his deputy Boldin. The unorganized withdrawal of the 3rd Army from the Grodno region and the 4th from the Brest region sharply complicated the situation for the 10th Army, commanded by Major General K.D. Golubev. Without air cover, communications and sufficient supplies, Boldin's forces could not count on serious success. The Germans skillfully parted and lured them under the fire of anti-tank artillery. By the end of the day on June 25, the losses of the Cavalry Corps reached 50%; one tank division was left without ammunition, the other had only 3 tanks left. Khatskelevich's corps was soon left without fuel, the crews dismounted and most died, the commander was killed. Nevertheless, the sacrifices and actions of the Boldin group allowed many units to avoid encirclement near Bialystok.

Pavlov wanted to get out of contact with the enemy by retreating across the Shchara River near Slonim. Not all units received orders, the rest had to leave on foot and under constant air attacks. The 13th Army, which at that time was trying to advance to the west, fell into the trap of the advancing advanced German units.

Minsk was under attack from the first minutes of the war, the Germans bombed it with unrelenting fury. The remnants of the Soviet aviation fought with the despair of the doomed, went to ram, but all this was not enough. Stalin's representatives in Belorussia were useless at best. Marshal Shaposhnikov quickly fell ill; in addition, his combat experience related to the First World War. He, at least, behaved unobtrusively: Another visiting marshal, Kulik, tried to command, but soon, to everyone's relief, he got lost in search of Boldin's group and almost got captured. The party boss of Belarus, Ponomarenko, had the courage to call Stalin on the afternoon of the 23rd and say that it was time to evacuate Minsk.

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Stalin expressed surprise, perhaps feigned, but Ponomarenko stood his ground: the western regions of the republic were already lost, and urgent care should be taken of the capital and the eastern part - before it was too late. The leader agreed, pointing out that in the first place, the party and state archives should be saved. On June 24, the evacuation was in full swing. Everything of value was taken out: money, gold, equipment, grain, livestock... On the evening of the 25th, the party and state leadership left the city. As for the rest of the population, everyone chose as best he could.

Pavlov even earlier transferred his headquarters from the burning city to the region of the Borovoe farm. There, however, there were no means of communication, and he had to communicate with the troops with the help of messengers. The results of this change were predictable. Now the commander did not know what was going on under his nose.

Panzer Group Gotha traveled more than 200 km in four days. Having easily captured Vilnius, she turned to Molodechno and Minsk, covering the Soviet troops in Belarus from the north and northeast. At the same time, the forces of Guderian and Kluge carried out envelopment from the south and southeast.

On June 26, Pavlov sent a panicked report to Moscow that a thousand Goth tanks surrounded Minsk from the northwest and there was no one to stop them. At this time, the Germans played their own drama. Guderian was ordered to link up with Goth, which was 25 kilometers north of Minsk. Both tank generals obeyed with great reluctance. They wanted to continue the offensive and close the pincers much deeper to the east - in the Smolensk region. One corps of Guderian's group continued to move towards Bobruisk on the Berezina and Rogachev on the Dnieper. On the same day, Korobkov tried to keep Slutsk, but by nightfall, Guderian's tanks broke into the city. The 4th Army, the only one of the covering armies, continued to fight, but its position worsened every hour.

Something had to be done, but no one imagined that Shaposhnikov would gather courage and inform Moscow that, in view of the impending fall of Minsk, troops should be sent there from the border, from Bialystok. It was a strange recommendation, unrealistic in any case. Nothing was known about the 10th Army for three days, units of the 3rd Army were scattered throughout Central Belarus. Timoshenko's answer was not

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better. He gave permission to withdraw troops from the border, but not to Minsk and Slutsk, but to the Lida-Slonim-Pinsk line, 120 km west of the capital of Belarus. Slonim fell into the hands of the Germans the day before, but Timoshenko did not seem to know about it. "The People's Commissar for Defense sent phantom armies into non-existent trenches" (RezVakoh, p. 142).

The time has come to tell about the 13th Army, not fully formed, which was located in the rear of the Western Front. On the morning of June 23, Commander Filatov received an order to take Molodechno, a railway junction on the right flank of the front, 60 km from Minsk. Upon arrival at the place the next day, he found that the Germans were already on their way to the town. At 9 pm an order came from Pavlov: to take command of the retreating units and counterattack. Filatov complied with the order, but it was an attempt with unsuitable means. On the 25th the Germans captured Molodechno. At midnight, scouts from the column, which included Filatov's headquarters, ran into a group of Germans in the forest, who were carelessly settling down for the night. The soldiers pitched tents, and the officers splashed in the stream. Forty bathers were killed, five were taken prisoner. Among the trophies were several briefcases with documents, including a map showing the location of the troops of Army Group Center. Filatov's people learned that two tank armies were operating against the Western Front, both aimed at Minsk. A few days later, all these documents were handed over to Shaposhnikov.

Pavlov did not act in the best way in the first week of the war, but it is worth pointing out that his hands were tied. Before June 22, he was not allowed to put his troops on alert, after the outbreak of hostilities he was forced to send troops into senseless counterattacks.

On June 28, or even earlier, Timoshenko spoke with Eremenko and appointed him commander of the Western Front in place of Pavlov. The new commander arrived at the scene only on June 30.

It seems that on the Soviet side the only sensible solution was a strategic retreat. It was necessary to withdraw all the surviving troops deep into the territory, restore command and control, which was clearly lost in the first hours of the war, and then organize defense on real frontiers. Stalin, who thought in terms of political categories and symbols, could not make such a decision. Moreover, its main

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The military advisers, Timoshenko and Zhukov, did not recommend anything of the kind. The implementation of Directives No. 02 and No. 03 resulted in the senseless deaths of tens and hundreds of thousands of Soviet servicemen.

On June 28, the troops of the 3rd and 10th armies were surrounded near Bialystok, however, some of them managed to break out of the loose ring and retreat to the east. In the evening, Soviet troops left Minsk. Over the next two days, the tank groups [uderiana and Gota joined up east of Minsk. The troops retreating from Grodno and Bialystok, and the units holding the defense in the Minsk fortified region, fell into this pocket, Novogrudok. Pavlov at that time did not know what was happening to his troops. Moscow learned about the encirclement from intercepted German messages.

We have already said that the troops of the Byelorussian Front, pushed into the Bialystok salient at Stalin's insistence, were in a semi-encirclement even before the outbreak of hostilities. Therefore, the blame for this cannot be laid on Pavlov. Anyway, he was dismissed on the sixth day of the war, in fact, he handed over the affairs of Eremenko on the 30th. The first directive of the new commander stated the created bad situation:

1. The enemy captured Minsk and seeks to reach the Dnieper, directed the main efforts to Mogilev and Zhlobin.

The main enemy grouping was marked up to 1000-1500 tanks east of Minsk and up to 100 tanks broke through the Berezina in the Bobruisk area.

2. Right and left flanks are open.

The troops were tasked with destroying the tanks that had broken through in the Bobruisk area and gaining a foothold on the Berezina for a while. In addition, Eremenko took up air support. On July 1, the first Soviet air raid took place near Bobruisk and Borisov. According to Eremenko, success was achieved: in two days the enemy lost 60 vehicles, Soviet losses amounted to 18.

Meanwhile, in Moscow, Stalin also took up the Western Front, on July 2 he appointed Timoshenko as commander, formally he remained People's Commissar, but soon, on the 19th, the leader appointed himself in his place. On July 4, Tymoshenko arrived at the front line. Eremenko became his deputy, like Budyonny, not

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long before that he had been appointed commander of the Reserve Front. The Western Front included 5 armies of the Reserve, which occupied positions in the upper reaches of the Western. Dvina and the upper reaches of the Dnieper. The replacement of Eremenko was dictated, like many other decisions of the leader, by political considerations: Stalin decided to concentrate all the leadership of the war in his hands. As a commander, Timoshenko repeatedly revealed his incompetence, until finally, in the fall of 1942, even Stalin realized that the first-horse marshal was completely unsuitable for commanding troops.

Meanwhile, the troops who were surrounded near Bialystok ceased resistance by July 3. 290 thousand people were taken prisoner, including several commanders of divisions and corps. The Germans captured or destroyed 2,500 tanks and 1,500 guns. in german

In total, 22 rifle divisions, 7 tank divisions and 6 mechanized brigades were defeated (see Zezhfop, Ki\$\$-Segtap \Mag, p. 125). The 3rd and 10th armies ceased to exist, the same thing happened with most of the 13th, as well as with parts of the 4th and 1st armies.

Northwest: the road to Leningrad

To the north of the ill-fated Western Front was the North-Western Front of Colonel-General F.I. Kuznetsova. This commander, like many others, was recently appointed. Its front, formed from the Baltic district, was supposed to protect approximately 250 km of the border. Under the command of Kuznetsov there were three armies: the 27th N.E. Berzarina, stationed at some distance from the border on the Baltic coast, 8th P.I. Sobennikov in the northern section of the border and to the south 11th V.I. Morozov. The 27th Army, formed just a month before the start of the war, defended sections of the coast of the Gulf of Finland and Riga and the islands of the Moonsund archipelago. In total, the front included 25 divisions (19 rifle, 4 tank and 2 motorized rifle) and 4 brigades (1 rifle and 3 airborne), 1,150 tanks, 6,400 guns and mortars, and 877 combat aircraft. According to other sources, there were more artillery tanks and aircraft: respectively, 1514, 7467, 1814.

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The Northwestern Front was attacked by Field Marshal Wilhelm von Leeb's Army Group North, the smallest of the three German formations. It included Hoepner's 4th Panzer Group and two field armies - Ernst Busch's 16th and Georg von Küchler's 18th; a total of 29 divisions, including three armored and three motorized. Nevertheless, Leeb had an advantage over Kuznetsov, especially in terms of the number of personnel.

| North Army Group Ratio | Western front. - "North" - _

| Divisions 25 1:1.2 (Personnel | 375863 B 78750 | 12:: , Guns 7467 8348 "Rl mortars | Tanks 154 69 | 2 Aircraft 2.2:1

The preponderance of Kuznetsov's troops in terms of the number of units of military equipment was actually not so significant, if we take into account that many Soviet tanks and aircraft were of outdated models. In the direction of the main attack, the Germans were even stronger, not to mention the quality of command.

18th Army

| | 8th army | and 4th tank | Ratio

Al a

Divisions 7 16 1:2 Personnel 82,010 360,060 1:4.4

Guns and mortars = 1574 @ 406 " 129 _

| Tanks 730 649 1.2:1

There were only seven Soviet divisions in the border zone, ten more were deployed 50-100 km from the border around Vilnius, Kaunas, Siauliai and further to the rear in the area of OPOCHKA, Pskov. The weakness of the Soviet forces on this section of the border was a direct result of Stalin's decision in the autumn of 1940 to station troops on the border. From mid-June, Soviet units began to pull up to the border with East Prussia, but by the start of hostilities it was not completed.

The operational disposition of Leeb's troops was as follows. In the center on the tip is the 4th Panzer Group, behind it on the left is the 18th Army, on the right is the 16th. The scheme was not perfect. fak

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Practically almost all the tanks were in the first line, nothing was left in reserve, except for one infantry division. At Göpner, Manstein's 56th tank corps (1 tank division, | motorized, | infantry) was supposed to go along the only suitable road to Daugavpils (Dvinsk, Dunaburg) on the Dvina, for this reason it was not initially used called his motorized division. Reinhardt's 41st Panzer Corps (2 panzer divisions, | motorized, | infantry) had a wider offensive zone; he was to defeat the Soviet 3rd and 12th mechanized corps, and then go to the Dvina at Kuspils (Jakobstadt). In the reserve of the Göpner group there was one tank division - the SS "Dead Head".

From the very beginning, Kuznetsov relied on a counterattack, which was expected of him in Moscow. The goal was to restore the front by patching up the holes from the German breakthroughs. The situation in the sector of the 11th Army quickly became catastrophic. Commander Morozov, having lost contact with the front headquarters, ordered the troops thrown back to Kaunas (Kovno) on the Neman to retreat even further northeast to Jonava, where the 23rd Rifle Division V.F. was concentrated. Pavlova. After that, Morozov sent his troops to the city, which he had just surrendered virtually without a fight. The attack, in which Divisional Commander Pavlov was killed, failed, the 16th Rifle Corps rolled back to the east and ended up in a deep operational encirclement. All Morozov's attempts to rectify the situation were unsuccessful. When he finally established a telegraph connection with Kuznetsov, he refused to talk to him, mistaking him for a German spy. At this time, the Germans were tearing the 1st Army to pieces, and the front services stopped all attempts to give it

help.

By the end of the first day of the war, the tank formations of the Göpner group were already 60-70 km from the border. In the sector of the 8th Army, Kuznetsov made an attempt, with the help of flank attacks by two mechanized corps, the 3rd and 12th, to stop Reinhardt's corps, which had just broken through to the Dubysa, the right tributary of the Neman. At the same time, he ordered to operate in small columns so as not to attract the attention of enemy aircraft. There was little sense in this recommendation, except for the dissipation of forces. The 12th mechanized corps came under heavy bombardment and was unable to return to their original positions.

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June 23, with the exception of the 28th tank division of Colonel Chernyakhovsky, which, however, after a two hundred-kilometer march under bombs, was significantly weakened even without gasoline. As for the 3rd Mechanized Corps, its 2nd Panzer Division was able to intercept the German 6th Panzer Division on the march and inflicted heavy losses on it, destroying, according to the reports, 40 tanks and 40 guns. What happened next, says D. Menshikov (Im). 11 \$ Togu.ri.gi):

"However, the very next day, the division began to retreat due to an acute shortage of fuel and ammunition and air strikes, and on June 26, the Germans from the Daugavpils direction went to its rear. As a result, the division commander, Major General Solyankin, died, and her remnants, together with the headquarters of the 3rd mechanized corps, began to get out of the encirclement. Thus, the counterattack of the 3rd mechanized corps, and in fact one of the 2nd tank divisions, failed due to the 56th Manstein tank corps entering the rear and supply problems. As a result of the fighting, the 3rd mechanized corps almost completely lost its combat effectiveness: on June 25, the 5th tank division had only [5 tanks, 20 armored vehicles and 9 guns, the 2nd tank division ceased to exist."

Up to 250 tanks took part in this tank battle from the Soviet side. Basically, these were obsolete vehicles, but when they were supported by heavy KVs, the Germans had a hard time. Their 1st Panzer Division reported that anti-tank shells "just bounce off these Russian monsters." However, the German command quickly attracted the artillery placed on the heights, and already on June 26 completely controlled the situation. The German 41st Corps, having destroyed [180 Soviet tanks and over 100 guns, was able to advance towards the Dvina (Zgafop, Kiz\$50-Segtap \lag, p. 103). At this time, the infantry of the 18th and 16th armies advanced rather quickly. She took possession of Kaunas and many ports and airfields; almost everywhere the local population greeted the Germans very kindly. There were cases of serious resistance only in Liepaja (Libau) and in Riga. As for Manstein's 96th Panzer Corps, by the end of the fourth day of the war it reached Daugavpils, having overcome 270

km.

As a result of a poorly thought-out attack by two mechanized corps, a

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an open gap of 120 km, which Goth immediately took advantage of. By the evening of June 25, the 8th Army rolled back to Riga, and the 11th - behind Vilnius in the direction of Sventsyany and Disna.

Troop control was in many cases lost. After the breakdown of telephone communication, the commanders did not know how or did not want to use the radio, although in many cases they had at their disposal serviceable radios. Randomly retreating troops clogged all available roads.

On June 25, People's Commissar Timoshenko ordered Kuznetsov to organize a "stubborn defense" on the Western Dvina, using Sobennikov's 8th Army and Berzarin's 27th Army. The latter was to transfer his forces from the islands and from Riga. Together with the 27th Army, Lelyushenko's 21st Mechanized Corps from the Moscow District was also to operate. On the 28th, he attacked the German bridgehead, but could not advance very far. Soviet aviation unsuccessfully tried to destroy the bridges across the river. The next day, two corps from the Stavka reserve were to come into action, but Kuznetsov ordered them to retreat to Pskov, where by that time the front headquarters had moved. It is difficult to say what he was guided by. The next day, Kuznetsov came to his senses (or was afraid of Moscow's wrath) and scheduled a counteroffensive for 10.00. However, Manstein's 96th Panzer Corps went on the offensive five hours earlier.

Probably, the first intervention of Hitler in the adoption of operational and tactical decisions dates back to this time. Through Keitel, he gave instructions to Halder on sending the 41st Corps after the 56th, and on how to seize the crossing at Krustpils. This created confusion and confusion in the command structure. Fuhrer Directive No. 21 ordered Leeb's group to defeat the enemy in the Baltic, and then capture Leningrad. At the same time, the directive of the OKH was less categorical on this score, the tasks of defeating the Soviet Baltic grouping and capturing Leningrad were set there without indicating priority or priority. Leeb, in accordance with the long-standing German military tradition, which gave considerable independence to the commanders, considered this his prerogative.

| July Leeb arrived at Hoepner's headquarters and briefed him on the details of his plan. 16th Army seals the Baltic

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ku, cutting it off from the rest of Soviet territory, at this time the 4th Panzer Group covers its eastern flank, for which it moves northeast to Lake Ilmen through a wooded wetland, where there were practically no roads. Hot Goepner, a former cavalryman and a staunch supporter of the tank fists, was beside himself. The infantry divisions were scattered all over the Baltic, and it could take a good two weeks to assemble them. In his opinion, the tank formations should be sent straight to Leningrad along the route between the Chudskoye and Ilmenskoye lakes. Leeb, a generally competent commander, had rather old-fashioned views regarding the independent use of tanks - as did many others from the top military leadership. Under pressure from Göpner, he made a compromise decision: Manstein's corps was advancing on Novorzhev in the direction of Ilmen, while Reinhardt's corps was advancing on Ostrov and further on Leningrad. Hoepner tried to appeal to the OKH, but for a week the question of the further direction of the main attack hung in the air.

The stubborn defense of the 27th Army on the Western Dvina (Daugava) cracked a few days later. Here and there the Germans seized critical bridges unexploded. On the 29th they entered Riga. The new commander of the Northwestern Front, Sobennikov, in accordance with the order of the People's Commissar, tried to create a line of defense south of Lake Peipsi on the Velikaya River. This did not prevent the 4th Corps from taking Pskov on 8 July. On the 26th, the commander of the 118th division N.M. was sentenced to death for this. Głowacki is another example of the punishment of front-line personnel for the miscalculations of the high command. In a strange way, Kuznetsov came out unscathed. He was only removed from command of the front, but things did not go any further. Wherever he was appointed during the war, he always proved his mediocrity, after which a new appointment followed. True, he froze at his rank of Colonel General. In 1948 he retired due to illness.

Leeb's attack on Leningrad, which had begun so successfully, soon began to slip. One of the reasons was the differences in the German leadership. Hitler considered Leningrad and the Ukraine, Brauchitsch and Halder to be the primary targets of the Barbarossa plan.

— Moscow. The position of the OKH was reflected in the distribution

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resources: Army Group Center in the Moscow direction was the strongest - three field armies and two tank groups. In addition, Leeb's overly conservative approach to the use of tank formations did not improve matters. He did not allow Hoepner to send his two tank corps to Leningrad. Instead, he sent Manstein's corps through the wooded wetlands to Opochka and Novorzhev. This undertaking ended with the tanks being unable to advance further through the swamp. The corps was returned to the Island. However, the new direction to Novgorod and Chudovo again ran through forests and swamps.

On July 12, G6pner sent 41st Panzer Corps along the eastern shore of Lake Chudov to Narva to attack Leningrad from the west across open country along the Baltic coast. Now the two German tank corps were separated by more than 100 km of forests and swamps, and they could not support each other. The right flank of Manstein, slowly advancing towards the Bottom, remained uncovered from the Soviet troops, which accumulated south of Staraya Russa and Lake Ilmen. At this time, the German infantry was still far behind. In addition, [Hitler, who could not set priorities, demanded that Bush's 16th Army (12 infantry divisions), subordinate to Leeb, maintain close contact with Army Group Center and be ready to support it. For this reason, 60% of the forces of the 16th Army were moved south to Belarus, and one corps was completely transferred to Army Group Center. As a result, the flanks of G6pner's Panzer Group remained open to attacks from three Soviet armies - Morozov's 11th, Berzarin's 27th, and Kachanov's 34th.

On July 14, the 41st Panzer Corps entered the lower reaches of the Luga, 100 km from Leningrad. Here he stood for three and a half weeks, waiting for the General Panzer Corps, which was advancing slowly through difficult terrain, and the infantry, which, as we know, Hitler sent south. In August, Leeb was still moving towards Leningrad in the forests between countless lakes and swamps. With only three panzer divisions for two corps and insufficient infantry, he was never able to solve the problem of his exposed right flank. In addition to this, the resistance of the Soviet troops intensified. The underestimation of the enemy's reserves cost the Wehrmacht dearly. "If we destroy

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we press a dozen divisions, they will put a dozen others in its place," Halder wrote dejectedly in his diary, "they are approaching their sources of supply, while we are moving away from ours."

northern front

Another front in this theater, the Northern one, formed from the Leningrad Military District, was supposed to protect the area from Murmansk in the north to Pskov in the south, including the coast of the Gulf of Finland. On June 23, M.M. became the commander of the front. Popov, who returned from Murmansk.

RELATION OF FORCES IN THE NORTHERN DIRECTION

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italy li pii pllll le pllen ila

North | Army Guppa

Western Front "North" Value (Russian) | (German) II ZI one VNII .

: Divisions Personnel | Guns and mortars

| tanks

: Aircraft

In the direction of the main attack, Army Group North managed to achieve a more favorable balance of forces.

ii shii - and ii iti ska) , RU tank group (German)

call and vovo vovo ovo oo oo no opav oo papai ii ooiiii blue ovo vo o vzvveo nea vvevoyan i 4

| Divisions 16

Ratio :

| Personnel , Guns and mortars

Oh wow - :

| tanks

On South

We have already said that at the beginning of the war, the Kiev Special Military District, transformed into the Southwestern Front, was better equipped with troops than the other two theaters. Here is what Kirponos had at his disposal (the armies are given in a position from north to south): Potapov's 5th army, 6th Muzychen-

ko, 26th Kostenko and 12th Monday, a total of 32 infantry and 3 cavalry divisions, 8 mechanized corps. The enumerated troops were deployed in an area of 370 km from the southern tip of the Pinsk marshes to the northern point of the border with Romania.

On June 21, another front, the Southern Front, was created on the Romanian border, and Tyulenev was placed at the head, who at that time was the commander of the Moscow District and arrived with his headquarters. This front included the 18th army of A.K. Smirnov and the 9th Cherevichenko, as well as the 9th separate rifle corps. The front had 15 rifle, 3 cavalry, 6 tank, 3 motorized divisions. In addition, the Southern Front included four URs (10, 12, 80 and 82nd). The Danube military flotilla, the Odessa naval base and the border detachments of the NKVD were under its operational subordination.

Together, the fronts of Kirponos and Tyulenev had | | 400 million people, 25,580 artillery pieces and mortars, 8,069 tanks and 4,696 aircraft (Beshanov, pp. 194-199). Vatutin's reference gives the following number of formations: a total of 97 divisions, including 63 rifle, 20 tank, 10 mechanized and 2 cavalry divisions.

The German grouping in this theater was relatively modest (Army Group South). At the same time, von Runstedt's forces were dispersed geographically. The left wing, stationed in Poland, consisted of von Kleist's Panzergruppe, von Reichenau's 6th Army and Stülpnagel's 17th Army. It was separated by Hungarian territory from the left wing located in Romania, which included von Schober's 1st Army and two Romanian armies - the 3rd (Petre Dumitrescu) and the 4th (Nicolae Cuperca). In total, Army Group South had 14 Romanian divisions and 41 | German, among the latter about tank and 3 motorized.

Initially, the Germans planned to carry out a double encirclement of Soviet troops in the Ukraine: one tank wedge strikes from Poland to the east, the other from Romania to the northeast, with the task of linking up in the Kiev area. However, in March 1941, Hitler changed the offensive scheme in favor of a single encirclement, which was carried out only by the forces stationed in Poland. He stated that the Prut and Dniester rivers were advancing on their way

our troops may be too difficult obstacles. It seems that the real reason was the fear for the fate of the non-oil fields in Ploiesti (see zeyup, Ki\$0-Segman \ar, p. 133). It is difficult to understand this logic, but such twists and turns are not uncommon in the Fuhrer's strategic thinking.

As a result, the 11th German Army and the Romanians remained in place, guarding the territory of Romania. They were supposed to go on the offensive against Kamenetz-Podolsk, Mogilev-Podolsk and Odessa only on the eighth day of the war, when the Soviet troops in Ukraine were encircled or retreated, i.e. when there is no more danger of losing Ploiesti.

Thus, the main burden of the attack fell on the 1st Panzer Group and the infantry of the 6th Army following it. They were supposed to go to Kyiv, and then move southeast along the banks of the Dnieper to the Black Sea in order to capture river crossings and prevent the retreat of the Red Army in an easterly direction. As for the 17th Army, it had to go to Lvov and Vinnitsa.

The balance of power in Ukraine was such that the Germans could not count on a success similar to the Belarusian one. After the war, Kleist told Liddell Hart that he had only 600 tanks (see TPe Chegtap Sepega | 5 ... p. 174-175):

"It will seem incredible to you, but this is all that we were able to collect after the divisions returned from Gfetsia. Budyonny's Army Group, which opposed us in the south, had about 2,400 tanks. In addition to surprise, our chances of success were based on the best training and military skill of our troops. These were our decisive values until the Russians gained combat experience.

..Preparation for long-term hostilities was not. Everything was based on the idea of achieving a decisive result before the fall."

The army group of Budyonny mentioned in the quote is the troops of the South-Western direction. There were even more tanks there - about eight thousand. Of course, most of these were light vehicles of outdated models, but more importantly, the Soviet command did not know the basics of modern tank warfare. We still have to talk about it.

On June 22, as we know, Runstedt's right flank, the 11th Army and the Romanians, remained passive. Tanks on the left flank

Kleist wedged into the 90 km gap between the 5th army of Potapov and the 6th Muzychenko in the direction of Rovno. Three Soviet mechanized corps were located on the axis of advance of the German Panzer Group I - the 22nd Kondrusev, the 9th Rokossovsky and the 19th Feklenko; later, two more were transferred there - the 8th Ryabyshev and the 15th Karpezo. They were supposed to stop Kleist according to a plan hastily worked out by Kirponos and Zhukov, who arrived at the headquarters of the Southwestern Front in Ternopil by the evening of the first day of the war. It was also envisaged that Vlasov's 4th mechanized corps would participate in the operation, but even earlier, on the orders of Commander Muzychenko, it was involved in parts on a wide front from Przemyśl to Rava-Russkaya, and it was not possible to withdraw it from the battle. June 23 to | July in the space between Lutsk and Rovno fierce tank battles took place. Theoretically, the six corps scheduled for a counterattack on the 1st Panzer Group should have wiped it off the face of the earth. Some tanks of new models there were 787 against 600 for Kleist; in general, the Soviet corps consisted of over 4 thousand tanks. Even with the deduction of the 4th mechanized corps, which got stuck in another sector, the Germans were opposed by 3162 tanks, including 331 vehicles of new models.

Without the 4th MK | 3162 O OT

However, the expected quick defeat of the less equipped enemy did not occur. Without going into technical details, there were two main reasons for this. The first was the tactical and operational weakness of the Soviet commanders, including Zhukov and Kirponos, coupled with insufficient and inadequate training of the troops. The second was related to the professional superiority of the German side.

Having unexpectedly run into large formations of Soviet tanks, which were brought into battle in parts, the Germans would

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well adapted. They immediately pulled their relatively lighter vehicles back, behind the positions of their divisional anti-tank and anti-aircraft artillery, which, skillfully using the terrain, crushed the counterattacking Soviet units; besides, they were attacked by bomber strikes.

Soviet mechanized corps detained Kleist for several days, but could not stop him. Of course, the advance of the Germans in the Ukraine was not as rapid as in Belarus and the Baltic states, but this was mainly due to the superiority of forces on the Soviet side and the frozen right flank of Rundstedt. After the war, Zhukov tried to inflate the significance of this counterattack, along with his own role (vol. 1, pp. 276-277):

"Our historical literature somehow only in general terms concerns this greatest frontier battle in the initial period of the war with Nazi Germany. It would be necessary to analyze in detail the operational expediency of using here a counterattack by mechanized corps against the main enemy grouping that had broken through, and the organization of the counterattack itself. Indeed, as a result of precisely these actions of our troops in Ukraine, the enemy's plan for a swift breakthrough to Kyiv was thwarted at the very beginning. The enemy suffered heavy losses and became convinced of the resilience of the Soviet soldiers, who were ready to fight to the last drop of blood."

This is a big stretch. In the next section, based on the memoirs of the commander of the 8th mechanized corps, General Ryabyshev, we will see, among other things, how this suicidal operation was led.

Odyssey of the Ryabyshev Corps

The corps, which was part of the 26th Army, was located at some distance from the border and was relatively well equipped: 30 thousand personnel, 932 tanks (1031 according to the state), 169 KV and T-34 tanks. The rest of the vehicles were obsolete models, the overhaul run of their undercarriage did not exceed 500 kilometers, 197 tanks were subject to factory repairs. Due to the economy of motor resources, the Armored Directorate of the Red Army did not allow combat training of crews on new tanks.

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June 22, 4.00. The head of the operational department of the 26th Army, on behalf of the commander, reported that the Nazi troops had violated the state border of the USSR in many places and were fighting with border guards, bombing border towns and airfields: "Please do not panic. We think that these are provocations. Don't give in to them! Do not open fire on German aircraft! Wait for further instructions!"

Ryabyshev received the order from the commander of the 26th Army at 10 o'clock. The corps was tasked with concentrating in the forests 10 kilometers west of Sambir by the end of the day on June 22.

Moved in the afternoon. Towards, from Sambir to Drogobych, there were troops [of the 3rd Rifle Corps of Major General Kirillov. Narrow highway, frequent delays. Under the weight of the tanks, the bridges across the ravines and rivers cracked and collapsed, the roadbed spread.

By evening, the 8th MK entered the Sambir forests. The headquarters of the corps is located on the edge. The headquarters of the 26th Army deployed nearby. At the appointed time, the commanders of formations and separate units arrived. In the initial area, ready for battle, there were 700 tanks. The remaining vehicles from among those in service with the corps were left for overhaul in the places of deployment.

At this time, an order was received from the commander of the Southwestern Front, Kirponos: the troops of the corps were to make a return night march along the same broken road, reach the area east of Lvov by dawn on June 23, and be placed at the disposal of the commander of the 6th Army, Muzychenko. After a 70-80-kilometer march to the west, without resting, the corps had to make a 120-kilometer march to the east.

On June 23, by [0200 hours], a significant part of the tank units had concentrated in the Yavorovo area, some units were still on the way. Muzychenko's order: on the morning of June 24, go on the offensive and with joint efforts push the enemy back beyond the state border.

June 23, 22.00. The new order of the commander of the Southwestern Front: by the end of the day on June 24, the troops of the 8th mechanized corps should concentrate in the area of the city of Brody, on the morning of June 25, strike at the tank group of Nazi troops in the direction of Brody, Berestechko.

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June 25th. By 3 p.m., the forward detachments of the corps reached the town of Brody, and by the end of the day, the main forces of the corps had concentrated in the indicated area. The results of the four-day 500-kilometer march: a large number of tanks of old designs broke down and could not reach the concentration area. T-35 tanks, for example, were all left on the traffic routes. A flamethrower tank battalion (T-26) also arrived, far from being at full strength. Remained on the roads and others

tanks of old designs. By this time, large defects were revealed in the KV tanks. Their brake bands from frequent turns during long continuous movement overheated and failed.

There was no enemy in Brody, and there were no Soviet troops there either. The corps received no information about the enemy from the front headquarters. There was no information about the neighbors on the left and right. Ryabyshev did not know with whom he would interact, which air units would support him.

June 26th. Having no information about his own and about the enemy, Ryabyshev decides to carry out the order. The divisions of the corps went on the offensive in the general direction of Berestechko. The first reports. [The 2nd Panzer Division, advancing in the main direction, could not achieve success on the move: the enemy's artillery and mortar fire was too dense. Enemy air strikes are especially noticeable. In large groups, 50-60 aircraft each, the enemy bombed the corps' combat formations almost without hindrance. There were no Soviet planes in the air ...

Preparing for the offensive, they did not take into account the superiority of the enemy in the air. The same mistake was made when deploying the command post of the corps, it was located in the forest in tents, i.e. they did not make a disguise and did not dug cracks. It cost a lot.

The Germans inflicted significant losses on the rear units. Many motor vehicles with ammunition and fuel and lubricants burned down. The command post of the corps was badly damaged. The main radio station of the corps and several staff vehicles were destroyed.

The 34th Panzer Division broke through the German defenses and went forward with stubborn battles. Parts of the 12th Panzer Division advanced 10-12 kilometers in a day. It was not possible to take Berestechko. Destroyed to infantry battalion, motorcycle

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battalion, 24 guns, 20 tanks, 20 enemy soldiers were captured. The rear of the division suffered significant losses from enemy air raids. The chief of staff of the unit, Colonel Popov, was killed. The 7th Motorized Division was unable to advance during the day.

27th of June. At about 4 o'clock in the morning, General Panyukhov arrived at the command post with an order from Kirponos: the corps should retreat to the rear behind the combat formations of the 36th Rifle Corps, which was defending at the Kremenets-Pidkamen line.

At 06:40, a new order from the front commander: the troops of the 8th mechanized corps were to drive the Nazis out of the city of Dubno, then move to a circular defense in the area of Dubno, Smordva, Pelcha, in anticipation of a general offensive by the front troops. Who are the neighbors on the right and left, how they will act - is still unknown.

At 8:50 in the morning, Ryabyshev began to dictate the order for the offensive. At this time, a member of the Military Council of the Southwestern Front, Corps Commissar N.N. Vashugin. Ryabyshev is trying to report. Bosses in a frenzy:

Why didn't you follow the order to attack Dubno?

The commander again tried to report the situation.

- Shut up! .. This is a betrayal!

"Comrade corps commissar," Brigadier commissar N.K., who was standing nearby, intervened in the conversation. Popel. - You can demand the execution of an order. However, we also need to listen.

The member of the Military Council looked angrily at Popel. Then, glancing at his watch, he ordered in a calm tone to report on the situation and the decision to fight.

— I have sent reconnaissance in order to establish the location, forces and grouping of the enemy. This task is performed by the corps motorcycle regiment. The troops of the corps can concentrate on the starting line by the end of the day and start the offensive only on the morning of June 28th.

- What?! Immediately forward!

- With what ahead? Ryabyshev asked.

"I order you to start attacking immediately!"

- I consider it a crime against the Motherland to throw troops into battle in parts. This means dooming them to an aimless death.

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In extreme cases, troops not at full strength can go on the offensive today no earlier than 14 hours.

"Very well," the member of the War Council agreed. — The last offer can be accepted. Do it!

Again there were partial successes at first, but things soon went awry. The 7th motorized and 12th tank divisions were in a semi-encirclement. The division commanders reported that the enemy was making efforts with fresh forces to close the ring, heavy losses had been suffered. The retreat begins.

Ryabyshev reports that the formations of the corps inflicted heavy damage on the enemy, defeated four motorcycle and five infantry battalions, destroyed more than 100 guns of various calibers, burned and knocked out more than 150 tanks. The corps destroyed and disabled several thousand enemy soldiers and officers, 300 Germans were taken prisoner.

The 8th mechanized corps entered the front reserve greatly weakened: approximately 19 thousand soldiers and commanders, only 207 tanks, of which: 43 KV and 31 T-34. Later, Popel's group broke out of the encirclement with fighting - another 778 people, but without tanks. Thus, during the week of fighting, the corps lost about 9 thousand personnel and more than 700 tanks.

Such is the sad story of Ryabyshev's corps; she, alas, was typical. The mechanized corps were created hastily, in the spirit of the peppy mood of the ruling class, in an effort to overtake and overtake the German aggressor. These paper hippos perished in the first days of the war.

Stalin returned Zhukov to Moscow on 26 June. The Chief of the General Staff did not forget to take credit for the fact that the German advance in the south was slowed down in the first week of the war. However, he chose not to mention the cost of this delay. Three armies of the Southwestern Front, 5th, and 26th, were defeated, the losses in the dead amounted to 60 thousand people. In addition, a huge amount of equipment was lost, including 2648 tanks. Stalin and Zhukov easily disposed of the sweat and blood of the Soviet people, and it was

just the beginning.

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STALIN DRIVING (GENERAL'S LEAF)

On June 23, the supreme body of strategic leadership was created - the Headquarters of the High Command, chairman Timoshenko, members: Stalin, Voroshilov, Molotov, Zhukov, Budyonny and Kuznetsov. Stalin in the first days of the war was clearly out of his mind, lost his usual self-confidence, even refused to speak to the country. For several critical days, from June 28 to June 30, he sat almost without getting out at his dacha in Kuntsevo and did not interfere in anything. It seems that the leader decided that his comrades-in-arms would send him to the Lubyanka, make him a scapegoat. It turned out that they had a thin gut for such an enterprise. They came to him with a humble request to be in charge. On this day, the State Defense Committee (GKO) was approved - the main body of the country's leadership during the war. Its composition was as follows: chairman Stalin, deputy Molotov and members Beria, Voroshilov and Malenkov.

The composition of the committee was prepared by Beria and Malenkov in the hope of taking more power for themselves. The project was being prepared when Stalin was actually out of the game and the possibility loomed that he might not return to active work. In this variant, the young and energetic two had a good chance of becoming a dominant force, since they thought faster and saw farther than the dull Molotov and the lazy sybarite Voroshilov.

Stalin, contrary to expectations, recovered from his stupor and firmly grabbed the helm. On July 3, he spoke on the radio. The text of the speech bears indelible traces of the Stalinist style. For example:

"How could it happen that our glorious Red Army surrendered a number of our cities and regions to the fascist troops? Are the German fascist troops really invincible troops, as the boastful fascist propagandists tirelessly trumpet about it?

Any editor would try to get rid of the annoying repetition of the same words, like troops and fascist, but the leader was not supposed to be edited. There was also something new. The speech began with an address, unusual for the Bolshevik leader, "Brothers and Sisters." Looks like half-educated seminary

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Christ Stalin remembered the familiar formula "brothers and sisters in Christ." The speech was long, 1,745 words, over seven typewritten pages, and contained Stalin's usual charges of shameless disinformation:

"Despite the heroic resistance of the Red Army, despite the fact that the best divisions of the enemy and the best units of his aviation have already been defeated and have found their grave on the battlefields, the enemy continues to push forward, throwing new forces to the front.

..the best divisions of the fascist German army were defeated by our Red Army ...

..170 divisions thrown by Germany against the USSR.

It may be asked: how could it happen that the Soviet government agreed to conclude a non-aggression pact with such treacherous people and monsters as [Hitler and Ribbentrop? Wasn't there a mistake on the part of the Soviet government here? Of course not!

What have we gained by concluding a non-aggression pact with [Germany? We ensured for a year and a half for our country the possibility of preparing its forces for repulse, if fascist [Germany] dared to attack our country in defiance of the pact. This is a definite gain for us and a loss for fascist Germany."

At the end of the speech, Stalin, in all likelihood, used the text of another of his documents:

"The State Defense Committee has begun its work and calls on all the people to rally around the Lenin-Stalin party, around the Soviet government for selfless support of the Red Army and Red Navy, to defeat the enemy, to win."

Returning to business, Stalin from the very first day took the reins of government into his own hands. Already on June 30, he sent Timoshenko to the Western Front, and he actually became at the head of the war machine. On July 10, he was officially declared chairman of the Headquarters, which for this occasion was renamed the Headquarters of the High Command; Shaposhnikov was included in its composition. July 19. Stalin appointed himself People's Commissar of Defense, and on August 8 - Supreme Commander. From that time on, the Stavka became known as the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command. These bureaucratic nuances were for the leader of life

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unimportant. It is interesting that his occupation of the position of the Supreme was made public only in 1943.

In the course of the war, Voroshilov, Timoshenko and Budyonny dropped out of the Headquarters - even Stalin realized their unsuitability. In February 1945, the GKO decree determined the following composition of this body: Stalin, Zhukov, Vasilevsky, Antonov, Bulganin, Kuznetsov. On June 23, an institute of permanent advisers to the Headquarters was also created, where from the military they got: Kulik, Shaposhnikov, Meretskov, Air Force commander Zhigarev, then deputy. Chief of the General Staff Vatutin, Air Defense Commander Voronov. Meretskov was soon arrested, released in September, sent to the front, Kulik was demoted, and Vatutin died. Civilian advisers - Mikoyan, Kaganovich, Beria, Voznesensky, Zhdanov, Malenkov, Mekhlis - worked until the end of the war. The institution itself actually came to naught very quickly. The State Defense Committee, which Beria and Malenkov conceived as the supreme body of wartime, was gradually expanded: in 1942 Voznesensky, Mikoyan and Kaganovich were added, and in 1944 Bulganin replaced Voroshilov. It is easy to notice the overlap between the members of the Headquarters and the State Defense Committee, for this reason both bodies were often indistinguishable.

The method of leadership of Stalin, a bureaucrat to the marrow of his bones, was based on the constant shuffling of personnel, endless renaming and reorganization. During the war, he remained true to himself. Here is an example taken at random. On August 24, the Supreme Commander, in the presence of Shaposhnikov and Vasilevsky, spoke by telephone with Eremenko (Bryansk Front). Stalin had the idea to disband the Central Front, and transfer its forces to Bryansk - with the task of breaking Guderian's tank group. What do you think, Comrade Eremenko? "It will be done, Comrade Stalin," the general responds cheerfully. Here are his words (Vasilevsky, p. 141): "And as for this scoundrel Guderian, we will certainly try to smash the task set by you, to fulfill, that is, to smash him." The leader liked the answer, the Central Front was liquidated. Vasilevsky, not without embarrassment, makes a reservation:

"The reader will probably find it strange how quickly such important decisions were made. Some fronts disbanded

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fell out, others were created. Some armies ceased to exist, others arose. I must say that one of the features of war is that it requires quick decisions. But in the constantly changing course of hostilities, of course, not only correct, but also not entirely successful decisions were made. War has its own style and its own rhythm of leading troops. In this case, organizational decisions were aimed at strengthening the Bryansk Front. Stalin still hoped that Eremenko would keep his promise."

Stalin had, one might say, a bad habit, just a little, to move commanders without serious reasons. General Ryabyshev known to us in the period from June 22, 1941 to July 3, 1942, successively commanded the troops of the 8th Mechanized Corps, the 38th Army of the Southern Front, the 97th Army and the 28th Army of the second formation. There were many such examples. A complete picture of the "general's leapfrog" is contained in the Appendix "Front Commanders by Theater of Operations". Vasilevsky, in an attempt to at least somehow whitewash his benefactor, adds: "War has its own style and its own rhythm of command of troops." I mean Stalin.

When planning Operation Barbarossa, the German generals feared most of all that the Russians would withdraw their troops deep into the country and would have to fight in a vast area. Stalin became at the head of the military machine, not even knowing the basics of military art. Out of ignorance, he unwittingly played into the hands of the Germans, throwing his divisions, corps and armies under their feet. The main result of this uncomplicated strategy was that in the summer of 1941 he was losing troops and territory, although he could save people and equipment, limiting himself to only territorial losses. Svechin warned against such clinging to geographic values. Stalin shot the general without bothering to read his book.

In one, however, Stalin did not help Hitler - he did not capitulate, although a couple of times he was close to this. On June 22 and October 7, the Soviet leader was ready to make huge concessions, but the Fuhrer, intoxicated with success, did not want to talk (Pavlenko, pp. 268-269); we will deal with this episode later. By the end of 1941, the stubbornness of the Soviet troops, winter and space caused

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the German army was severely damaged and brought it to the brink of exhaustion. On the whole, Stalin preferred to burn to the ground the towns and villages he abandoned (speech on July 3), but not to surrender, like the French. The strategy was effective, although at a cost to its own population.

In addition, Stalin managed to create an apparatus of total war - through and through bureaucratic, soulless and bone-breaking, but in the use of the country's resources, the Soviet leader definitely surpassed Hitler. The Fuhrer for a long time did not dare to transfer the German economy to a military footing, this happened only in 1942. The reason: the Nazis were not afraid of the discontent of the population, their main ideological and propaganda trump card was that they from the hardships of the economic crisis. Almost until the very end of the war, the Nazis could not decide on the use of female labor in the defense industry.

Stalin was a stranger to such concerns. The Soviet population, which had only recently experienced the horrors of collectivization, was put on a half-starved diet from the first days of the war. The calorie content of the ration for dependents was 780 calories, for most workers, especially employees, 1100 calories (see Oxyuga, p. 952). At the same time, the Bolshevik nomenklatura was fed for slaughter. 90% of consumer goods disappeared from circulation.

Stalin and his apparatus were also able to do something that the Germans did not expect from them in any way - they transported Soviet industry to the east. During the first three months of the war, 1523 enterprises were evacuated, incl. [360 defense. June to December 194 | 2593 enterprises were taken out of the areas threatened by the occupation. In total, 30,000 trains (1.5 million wagons) proceeded to the east during the evacuation. 2.4 million heads of cattle, 5.1 million sheep and goats, 0.2 million pigs and 0.8 million horses, a lot of agricultural machinery, grain and food were moved from the western regions.

The hopes of German experts to profit from the resources of the USSR did not come true. There was no traction or rolling stock on the railways in the occupied part of the country. To provide for the troops on the Eastern Front, it was necessary to shift

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rails to the European standard, and then deliver 2,500 locomotives and 20,000 wagons from Germany.

Hitler was of little use to his allies - they most often needed support themselves. At the same time, Stalin's partners, especially the United States, provided him with invaluable assistance, about this, too, in its place. This cooperation began in the summer of 1941. On July 12, an agreement was concluded with England. A week later, Stalin wrote a letter to Churchill. He acknowledged that the situation was tense, but suggested that it would be even worse if the Red Army had to start a war on the old frontiers that existed before the pact with Hitler:

"It can be imagined that the position of the German troops would be many times more advantageous if the Soviet troops had to take the blow of the German troops not in the area of Chisinau, Lvov, Brest, Bialystok, Kaunas and Vyborg, but in the area of Odessa, Kamenetz Podolsk, Minsk and the environs of Leningrad".

At the same time, he spoke in favor of opening a double "second front": one in Northern France, the second, Anglo-Soviet, in the Arctic. At the end of the month, President Roosevelt's representative Harry Hopkins arrived in Moscow. In conversations with him, Stalin acknowledged that the Soviet troops had to withdraw to the line Odessa-Kiev-Smolensk-Leningrad, but at the same time expressed a certain optimism (see Eiskoson, Zatotaa, p. 177). By the beginning of October, the front will be stabilized, until that time the Germans will not advance more than 100 km to the east. At the same time, it will be possible to defend such centers as Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev, where three-quarters of the Soviet defense industry is concentrated. In mid-October, bad weather will stop hostilities; in the spring of 1942, the Red Army will be able to launch a counteroffensive.

It turned out that now the Soviet people had no reason to worry.

Before the war, they enthusiastically sang:

When Comrade Stalin sends us into battle And the first marshal will lead us into battle.

Then they did not yet understand that the leader would send them to certain death.

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FAILURE IN THE DIMENSION OF SUCCESS

One aspect of the summer campaign of 1941 rarely attracts attention. From the very beginning, so to speak, the Wehrmacht lagged behind the schedule, did not fulfill the tasks planned for it. Such a statement may seem paradoxical, given its high-profile, downright phenomenal victories and rapid pace of advancement. The pedantic Chief of the German General Staff Halder wrote in his diary on July 3 (vol. 3, p. 78):

"In general, it can now be said that the task of defeating the main forces of the Russian land army in front of the Western Dvina and the Dnieper has been completed. I consider correct the statement of one captured corps commander that to the east of the Western Dvina and the Dnieper we can meet resistance only from individual groups, which, taking into account their numbers, will not be able to seriously hinder the offensive of the German troops. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the campaign against Russia was won within 1[4] days. Of course, it's not finished yet. The vast extent of the territory and the stubborn resistance of the enemy, using all means, will fetter our forces for many weeks to come.

This optimistic statement, however, quickly loses its luster if one recalls the main objective of the Barbarossa plan: to prevent the Red Army from leaving the Dnieper and to complete the main part of the campaign in 8-10 weeks. The main means was to cover large masses of Soviet troops. At the same time, the infantry provided the encirclement from the inside, from the west, and two tank groups closed the ring from the outside, from the east; we are talking about the strip of Army Group Center. This grandiose idea was never brought to full completion. For the first time, the German tank pincers almost closed in near Slonim, but many Soviet troops managed to break out. After that, a similar attempt was repeated in the Minsk region, hoping to fight a decisive battle there. The Germans captured many prisoners, but there was no complete success: again a significant number left the encirclement. The pincers did not have time to close in time due to unexpected heavy rains. To the east of Minsk, the conditions for the advance of tanks were even less favorable. words

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General Blumentritt, who in 1941 was Chief of Staff of Kluge's 4th Army ([444e] Nan, Segtap Sepega|5... p. 178):

"...extensive virgin forests, swamps at every turn, bad roads and bridges that could not withstand the weight of tanks. Russian resistance became more stubborn, in addition, they began to create minefields along the front. It was comparatively easy for them to slow down our progress, since there were so few roads.

Such terrain was difficult for tanks, but the auxiliary transport, carrying fuel, ammunition and technical personnel, was in an even worse position. Almost all of these vehicles were wheeled. They were forced to move only on roads and immediately stopped when these dirt roads became covered with mud. Rain lasting one or two hours actually led to a complete stop of the tank units.

At this point, one can, of course, notice that no one invited the Germans to the inhospitable Russian expanses, but we will confine ourselves to the purely factual side of the matter. Even with these obstacles, the German tanks continued to rush towards the Dnieper. At the end of July, a third attempt at a grandiose cauldron was made near Smolensk. Nearly half a million Soviet military

servicemen were under threat of encirclement. And again: the pincers could not be completely closed. A lot of Red Army soldiers went east through the gap left 10 km wide.

From the very beginning of the campaign, in contrast to the described method of large encirclements, Guderian and other tank innovators proposed a different method of attack, when the tanks go into the gap with all possible speed, leaving the encirclement of the enemy to the infantry following behind. Guderian attached paramount importance to the continuity of the offensive in order not to give the enemy time to regroup his forces. Such daring tactics involve considerable risk. On the other hand, the three failures of the complete encirclement jeopardized the success of the entire Wehrmacht campaign, since by the time they approached Smolensk, half the time allotted for it had already passed.

On the Desna near Smolensk, the troops of the Center group stood for several weeks. At first, this was dictated by the need to bring in supplies and reinforcements, but a lot of time was taken up by disputes about what to do next. Bock and Guderian

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The Russians wanted to march on Moscow, but Hitler was eventually tempted by the prospect of a large encirclement in the Kyiv region. In the Moscow direction, Stalin received a respite for August and September.

Interestingly, during the summer hitch, no one in the German command raised a voice that the campaign would not be completed as scheduled, that they would have to fight in the winter east of the Dnieper. For example, on August 13, Halder simply stated (vol. 3, p. 271):

"At present it is impossible to predetermine how the Kyiv problem can be solved and how soon it will be possible to seize the Crimea. Proposals are still being made on this issue. The same goes for timing the operation."

It seems that Halder, as before, believes that the campaign has been won. It doesn't occur to him that she's hopelessly bogged down.

NEW PURPOSE: PAVLOV AND OTHERS

The catastrophic failures of the first days of the war caused the usual Soviet or, if you like, Bolshevik reaction - repressions. Their victims were primarily the highest ranks of the Western Front. Here's how it happened, although not all the details are still clear.

It seems that the decision to remove Pavlov was made on the 27th, in any case no later than June 28th. Stalin was in voluntary imprisonment, so Timoshenko did everything. His candidate for the post of commander of the Western Front was Lieutenant General Andrey Eremenko. True, at that time he was on the road. Before the war, Eremenko commanded the 1st Separate Far Eastern Army, but on June 19 he received an order to surrender his affairs and go to Moscow. He left by train on the afternoon of the 22nd, knowing that the war had begun. Five days later, in Novosibirsk, I received an order from the people's commissar to get off the train and fly to Moscow by plane; on June 28, I came directly from the airfield to Timoshenko's office. There he learned about his appointment to the place of Pavlov and inquired about the task of his front. The marshal's answer was predictable (p. 65):

"Stop the advance of the enemy."

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The next day, Eremenko, together with the chief of staff of the front, Malandin, flew to Belarus. On June 30, early in the morning, they arrived at the command post of the Western Front in the forest near Mogilev. So Pavlov learned from his deposition. | In July, he, Klimovskikh and other senior commanders of the Western Front, together with Voroshilov and Shaposhnikov, left for Orsha, from where they flew to Moscow. There are reports that Pavlov was arrested on the same day, but this is unlikely. During interrogation, he himself testified that he was taken on July 4 in the town of Dovsk, Gomel Region:

"I was arrested on the afternoon of July 4 of this year. in Dovsk, where it was announced to me that I had been arrested by order of the Central Committee.

Later, the deputy spoke to me. prev. Council of People's Commissars Mehlis and announced that I was arrested as a traitor.

Zhukov, as usual, puts himself in the center of events, but sounds unreliable:

"On June 30, I.V. called me at the General Staff. Stalin ordered to call the commander of the Western Front, General of the Army D.G. Pavlova.

The next day, General D.G. Pavlov has arrived. I hardly recognized him, he had changed so much during the eight days of the war. On the same day, he was removed from command of the front and soon put on trial. Together with him, at the suggestion of the Military Council of the Western Front, the chief of staff, General Klimovskikh, the head of the communications troops, General Grigoriev, the commander of artillery, General Klich, and other generals of the front headquarters were tried.

We already know that Pavlov was removed on the 28th; it is also not true that Klich was tried together with Pavlov. But the marshal is lying with good intentions, for posterity.

There are reports that Pavlov tearfully asked the leader to accept him, who, through Zhukov, ordered him to return to the front. In this version, it is difficult to understand in what capacity Pavlov went there. According to Sudoplatov, the decision to arrest Pavlov was endorsed by none other than Zhukov himself: "Hostile relations have developed between Pavlov and Zhukov." This assertion also cannot be verified.

Who initiated the arrest of Pavlov is unknown. It is often written that it is from Stalin, but this is not based on anything. The following exchange of telegrams makes one think that other Bolsheviks were not dozing at this time. sent the first

Military Council of the Western Front:

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"Moscow, the Kremlin, Stalin.

The Military Council established the criminal activities of a number of officials, as a result of which the Western Front suffered a heavy defeat.

The military council decided:

1) To arrest the former chief of staff of the Klimovskys, the former deputy commander of the Air Force of the Tayursky front and the chief of artillery Klich.

2) Bring to court the commander of the 4th Army Korobkov, the commander of the 9th air division Chernykh, the commander of the 42nd rifle division Lazarenko, the commander of the tank corps Oborin.

3) We have arrested Grigoriev, Head of Communications of the Front, Dorofeev, Head of the Topographical Department of the Front, Kirsanov, Head of the Department of Manning the Front, Yurov, Combat Training Inspector of the Air Force Headquarters, and Sheinkin, Head of the Military Department.

4) The commander of the 8th disciplinary battalion Dykman and his deputy Krol, the head of the Minsk district medical warehouse Belyavsky, the head of the district military veterinary laboratory Ovchinikov, the commander of the division of the artillery regiment Sbirannik are brought to trial.

Timoshenko. Mehlis. Ponomarenko. 6. G. 4 [g. "

Pavlov is not mentioned, they obviously know that he is already in custody. As for the Klimovskys and two others in paragraph 1 they were told to arrest them, since they are no longer in Belarus. Stalin responded immediately:

"Tymoshenko, Mekhlis, Ponomarenko.

The State Defense Committee approves of your measures to arrest Klimovsky, Oborin, Tayursky and others and welcomes these measures as one of the surest ways to improve the health of the front.

No. 7387 6 July 4 | Mr. I. Stalin.

The document on the basis of which he was taken into custody was preserved in Pavlov's case:

"July 6, 194

"I approve" July 6, 1941 People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR Marshal of the Soviet Union (Timoshenko)

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I authorize the arrest. Prosecutor of the USSR (Bochkov) July 6, 1941

Resolution (on choosing a preventive measure)

Pavlov D.G.

Gor. Moscow, < » July [94 | Mr. I, deputy head. of the investigative unit of the Third Directorate of the NPO of the USSR, Senior Battalion Commissar Pavlovsky, having considered the materials received by the Third Directorate of the NPO of the USSR about the criminal activities of Dmitry Grigoryevich Pavlov, born in 1897, from the peasants of the Kostroma province, a military man, a former commander Western Front, member of the CPSU (b) since 1919, higher military education, Russian, citizen of the USSR, married, found that Pavlov D.G. suspected of crimes under Art. 108-1b1 [Code of Criminal Procedure of the RSFSR and, taking into account that Pavlov D.G., being at large, can hide from the judge, guided by articles 145 and 158 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the RSFSR

decided:

as a measure of suppression of methods of evading the investigation and trial of Dmitry Grigoryevich Pavlov, choose detention, which is in accordance with Art. 146 [The RSFSR to announce to the arrested against receipt in this resolution.

In accordance with Art. 160 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the RSFSR send copies of the decision to the Prosecutor and hand over to the head of the prison for inclusion in the personal prison file.

Deputy Head of the Investigative Unit of the 3rd Directorate of the NPO of the USSR

Senior battalion commissar (Pavlovsky)

"I agree" - deputy head. Divisional Commissar of the 3rd Directorate of the NPO of the USSR (Tutushkin)

This decision has been made known to me.

During the interrogation on July 7, Pavlovsky and investigator Komarov ask Pavlov a question about his treacherous activities, to which he gives the following answer:

"I am not a traitor, there was no malicious intent in my actions as a commander of the front.

I am also not guilty of the fact that the enemy managed to penetrate deep into our territory.

Then comes a long story about the misadventures of the Western Front in the first days of the war with the following conclusion:

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"The breakthrough on my front happened because I didn't have a new materiel, as much as, for example, the Kiev Military District had."

The investigators act according to their scheme, so at the end of the interrogation the following dialogue takes place:

"Question: In vain do you try to reduce the defeat to causes beyond your control. The investigation established that you were a participant in the conspiracy back in 1935 and then still had the intention of betraying the Motherland in a future war. The present situation at your front confirms these investigative data.

Answer: I have never been involved in any conspiracies and have never dealt with any conspirators. This accusation is extremely heavy for me and wrong from beginning to end. If there is any evidence against me, then this is a complete and obvious lie of people who want to denigrate honest people at least in some way and thereby harm the state.

Using advanced methods of persuasion, Pavlov was later forced to sign a statement about conspiratorial activity, but apparently there was some kind of behind-the-scenes fuss around the nature of the charges against him. This is evidenced by the Decree of the State Defense Committee of the USSR No. GOKO-169ss, issued on July 16. It says:

"An alarmist, a coward, a deserter is worse than an enemy, for he not only undermines our cause, but also denigrates the honor of the Red Army. Therefore, the reprisal against alarmists, cowards and deserters and the restoration of military discipline is our sacred duty if we want to keep the great title of a soldier of the Red Army unsullied."

On July 22, the Military Collegium headed by Ulrich, having considered the case of Pavlov, Klimovsky, Grigoriev and Korobkov, sentenced all four to be shot; accusations: cowardice, inaction of the authorities, lack of discipline, collapse of command and control of troops, surrender of weapons and depots to the enemy, unauthorized abandonment of combat positions by units, alarmism and criminal inaction, etc. Conspiratorial counter-revolutionary activity is not mentioned even once. Why Stalin abandoned the traditional accusations, we do not know. The fact that Article 98 was removed from the charges explains why Pavlov and other generals arrested for failures at the fronts were not tried together with Meretskov and his accomplices, although at first it seems that such an intention was.

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Stalin clearly wanted to make a subject lesson for the Red Army from the Pavlov case, the sentence for four generals was announced by order of the People's Commissar of Defense No. 0250 of July 28, 1941:

"The Supreme Court of the USSR Pavlov D.G., Klimovskikh V.E., Gioriev A.T. and Korobkov A.A. stripped of their military ranks and sentenced to death.

The sentence has been carried out.

I warn you that from now on everyone who violates the military oath, forgets their duty to the Motherland, discredits the high rank of a soldier of the Red Army, all cowards and alarmists who arbitrarily leave their combat positions and surrender their weapons to the enemy without a fight, will be mercilessly punished to the fullest extent of the law. new wartime, regardless of the faces ... "

The fate of Pavlov and his accomplices is just a page in a thick volume of the injustices of the Soviet regime. Commander-4 Korobkov, whose army, the only one in the Western Front, retained its combat capability, nevertheless ended up in the dock. Klimovskikh and Grigoriev did not deserve their fate either. Pavlov, not possessing the necessary qualities, from 1936 to 1940 took off from a major to an army general, but this cannot be blamed on him. He was dragged to the upper command floors by Stalin, who, after cutting down the command cadres in 1937-1938. was forced to promote unsuitable candidates. Pavlov obediently carried out the unrealistic and ill-conceived orders of People's Commissar Timoshenko and Chief [of the General Staff Zhukov, and when their catastrophic results were revealed, he turned out to be a scapegoat. He was sacrificed by the very persons who directed his actions: Stalin, Timoshenko, Zhukov.

Stalin, it seems, was subconsciously opposed to Pavlov also because he felt his guilt in the failure of the Western Front. It was he who, in 1940, rejected the general defensive scheme of the General Staff, which was developed on the basis that the Germans would deliver the main blow north of Polesie, in Belarus and the Baltic states. By order of the leader, more forces were deployed in the south - in the Kiev and Odessa districts. In the first days of the war, Kirponos and Tyulenev had 97 divisions, while Pavlov and Kuznetsov had 67 divisions. Glimpses of conscience in the leader were noticed by Zhukov (vol. I, p. 288):

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"And no matter how he accused D.G. Pavlov, nevertheless, it seemed to us that somewhere alone with himself, he felt in all this his pre-war miscalculations and mistakes.

The massacre of Pavlov and other commanders was not an exception or a random episode. It was part of the terrorist policy tested since the Civil War. Here is another example.

On August 16, 1941, Stalin signed Order No. 270 of the Headquarters of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, in which the commanders and rank and file of many advanced military formations that were surrounded were accused of cowardice and treason. Order ordered to destroy Soviet soldiers who surrendered by all means, "both ground and air." It was officially announced that only traitors and traitors could be captured by the enemy, so families

captured commanders and political workers were subject to arrest "as families of deserters who violated their oath and betrayed their homeland." Families of surrendered Red Army soldiers were ordered to "deprive state allowances and assistance."

At the insistence of Stalin, who always practiced mutual responsibility for state terror, this order was signed by V.M. Molotov, K.E. Voroshilov, G.K. Zhukov, S.M. Budyonny and B.M. Shaposhnikov.

End 194 | 3 million 800 thousand Soviet soldiers and officers fell into German captivity. This happened despite the inhuman cruelty of Stalin's policy, and perhaps partly as a result of it.

BATTLE OUTSIDE Kyiv

This battle was hushed up in the USSR for a long time - because of the egregious details. When they began to talk about him in the post-Stalin period, many tales were told. Here is one of them.

Tales of Zhukov

Georgy Konstantinovich Zhukov wrote in his memoirs that, as Chief of the General Staff, he foresaw the possibility of encircling Soviet troops back in July 1941.

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near Kyiv. Having asked for an audience with Stalin, he made an urgent report to the leader on the situation on the fronts. Here is the place of interest to us (vol. 1, pp. 351-353):

"- The Southwestern Front must now be completely withdrawn beyond the Dnieper. Concentrate reserves of at least five reinforced divisions behind the junction of the Central and Southwestern fronts.

— But what about Kyiv? - looking at me point-blank, asked I.V. Stalin.

I understood what the two words "surrender Kyiv" meant for all Soviet people and, of course, for I.V. Stalin. Noya could not succumb to feelings, and as Chief of the General Staff he was obliged to propose the only possible and correct, in the opinion of the General Staff and in my opinion, a strategic decision in the current situation.

"Kyiv will have to be abandoned," I said firmly.

There was a heavy silence...

I continued my report, trying to be calmer.

- In the western direction, it is necessary to immediately organize a counterattack in order to eliminate the Yelnin ledge. The Nazis can later use the Elninsk bridgehead for an attack on Moscow.

- What other counterattacks are there, what kind of nonsense? I.V. flared up. Stalin. "Experience has shown that our troops do not know how to attack..." And suddenly he said in high tones: "How could you think of surrendering Kyiv to the enemy?"

I couldn't help myself and replied:

— If you think that I, as Chief of the General Staff, can only talk nonsense, then I have nothing to do here. I ask to be relieved of my duties as chief [of the general staff and sent to the front. There I, apparently, will bring more benefit to the Motherland.

Again there was a painful pause.

"You don't get excited," said I.V. Stalin. "But by the way ... we managed without Lenin, and even more so without you ...

"I am a military man and I am ready to carry out any decision of the Headquarters, but I have a firm point of view on the situation and methods of waging war, I am convinced of its correctness and reported it as I myself and [the General Staff.

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I.V. Stalin did not interrupt me, but listened without anger and remarked in a calmer tone:

— Go to work, we will consult here and then we will call you. |

After collecting the cards, I left the office with a heavy feeling of my own impotence. About half an hour later I was invited to the Supreme.

"That's it," said I.V. Stalin, we consulted and decided to relieve you of your duties as Chief [of the General Staff. We will appoint Shaposhnikov to this place. True, his health is not all right, but nothing, we will help him. And we use you in practical work. You have extensive experience in commanding troops in a combat situation. In the active army you will bring undoubted benefits. Of course, you remain Deputy People's Commissar of Defense and a member of the Headquarters.

"Where would you like me to go?"

— Where would you like to go?

- I can do any job. I can command a division, corps, army, front.

- Don't get excited, don't get excited. You here reported on the organization of a counterattack near Yelnya. Well, get down to business. - Then, after a little hesitation, I.V. Stalin added: - The actions of the reserve armies on the Rzhev-Vyazma line of defense must be united. We will appoint you commander of the Reserve Front. When can you check out?

- In one hour.

- Shaposhnikov will soon arrive at the General Staff. Give him the dela and leave.

- May I leave?

"Sit down and have tea with us," said I.V., already smiling. Stalin - we'll talk about something else.

We sat down at the table and began to drink tea, but the conversation did not work out."

The reader sees that the perspicacious strategist Zhukov was not afraid to tell the bitter truth to the all-powerful I.V. Stalin, who at the same time showed his tough temper and statesmanship. The ingenious leader finally realized that the experienced professional Shaposhnikov would be better suited for the post of chief of staff than the former non-commissioned officer Zhukov, without having studied

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who studied at any military academy and never sniffed at staff work. All that was in his educational baggage was two classes of the city school and improvement courses. In November 1930, Rokossovsky made the following entry in Zhukov's attestation: "He cannot be appointed to staff and teaching work - he organically hates her." (Military History Journal, 1990, No. 5, p. 22).

The above conversation between Stalin and Zhukov has long become a textbook; almost all historians of the war refer to it, even the most scrupulous ones, such as John Erickson and N.G. Pavlenko. True, Albert Seaton (Seafope, Seip ... p. 109) made the following reservation back in 1975:

"...this is Zhukov's version of how he was removed from his post as Chief of the General Staff, although the reasons he cites are hardly real. Vasilevsky and Shtemenko are silent about this. Naval staffs experienced difficulties working with Zhukov; Khrulev [head of logistics] reports that by this time Zhukov had lost Stalin's confidence in staff and organizational matters. At the same time, however, Stalin continued to believe in his commanding abilities.

Other doubts are possible. At the end of July, Guderian's Panzer Group, one of two that would later close the ring around the Ukrainian capital, was far to the northeast. He expected an order to "advance towards Moscow, or at least towards Bryansk", but learned that Hitler was going to send him and the 2nd field army to Gomel. "In addition, the 2nd Panzer Group was additionally assigned the task of advancing in the southwestern direction in order to encircle the remaining 8-10 Russian divisions in this area" (Guderian, p. 246). At the end of July, it was just an idea, a consideration for the future. Brauchitsch, Halder, von Bock, not to mention Guderian and Hoth, rushed to Moscow. The controversy continued for a good three weeks. On August 3, the Germans took Roslavl. Guderian offered to go to Vyazma, the General Staff did not agree. Finally, on August 21, Hitler gave the order to concentrate the main efforts on the capture of Ukraine and the Crimea. Guderian tried to dissuade the Fuhrer from this undertaking, but had no success. On August 25, his tanks turned to the southwest.

In July 1941, Zhukov could not have known about German disputes, plans and intentions, the Soviet command had no such intelligence. He wrote his memoirs in the sixties - after

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publication of Guderian's memoirs, Halder's diary and other sources. The chapter "Liquidation of the enemy's Yelninsk salient", in which this conversation is described, was completely absent from the first edition. Memoirs editor A.D. Mirkina received it in March 1973 (Marshal Zhukov... vol. 2, p. 75). As K. Simonov testifies, Zhukov actively studied, in translation, the German generals, in particular Halder's diaries (ibid., pp. 189-192). Attributing to himself a far-sighted proposal to leave Kyiv, the marshal, most likely, had the goal of embellishing his own removal from the chief [of the headquarters, retrospectively undercoating reality. The reader had the impression that Zhukov had suffered for the truth. It is more likely that Stalin was extremely dissatisfied with the state of affairs and resolved it in his own style. According to Zhukov, Malenkov and Mekhlis were present at this historic interview, but they left no memoirs. As for the General Staff officers, Vasilevsky limited himself to stating a fact in his memoirs (p. 118):

"On the night of July 30, Marshal of the Soviet Union B.M. was appointed Chief [of the General Staff]. Shaposhnikov. I.V. Stalin preferred to use the team experience of G.K. Zhukov directly in the troops.

Shtemenko is equally stingy with details (p. 21):

"Then a reshuffling of personnel began and we ... Chief [of the General Staff G.K. Zhukov was appointed commander of the Reserve Front. Marshal B.M. returned to the General Staff. Shaposhnikov.

However, there is one more doubt - whether there was such a conversation at all. In any case, Zhukov's name is not listed in Stalin's Visitor's Journal for July 29. Here are all his registered visits for July:

July came and went 1 16.50 19.00.

3 4.00 01.40.

4 8.55 20.10.

5 4.30 15.30

6 23.35 01.40 17 7.25 17.35. 18 13.50 15.40. 20.25 23.55.

20 15.40 18.15.

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According to the magazine, after July 20, Zhukov did not appear at Stalin's until about August. Remember such a detail as he left and was called again. The double visit was noted only on 18 July. At the same time, it is possible that Zhukov was removed from the General Staff on the 29th, but in absentia; in this case, there was no courageous behavior in the face of a dictator. Shaposhnikov visited Stalin for the first time on the 30th in July: he arrived at 21.40 and left at 24.00.

Now about the witnesses mentioned by Zhukov (p. 351):

"...I went to the reception room of I.V. Stalin, where A.N. Poskrebyshchev, and asked him to report on me.

- Sit down. Ordered to wait for Malenkov and Mekhlis.

Ten minutes later everyone was assembled and I was invited to I.V. Stalin."

Obviously, Malenkov and Mekhlis went straight into the office. But things are no better for them either. According to the magazine, on July 29 Stalin did not have them either. Zhukov could have crossed paths with Malenkov on July 18, when he came twice, at 13.50 and 20.25. Malenkov that day stayed in the office of the Supreme Commander for a very long time: from 13.10 to 00.10. Mekhlis: in July I visited Stalin four times: on the 15th, 20th, 27th and 31st; consequently, there is only one intersection by date, namely the 20th, but, alas, the time does not match. Mekhlis spent only 10 minutes in Stalin's office that day (14.00-14.10), Zhukov arrived at 15.40.

According to most sources, Shaposhnikov was appointed chief of the General Staff on July 29 or 30, one site on the Internet gives July 21 (see Fateh Vergasov, General Staff and Military Intelligence).

The next Kiev episode in Zhukov's memoirs is even more dubious. On the afternoon of September 9, he was summoned from under Yelnya to the Kremlin, with orders to arrive by 20.00 (vol. 1, p. 370). Arrived late due to urgent business. Stalin, usually intolerant of such things, did not find fault that day:

"You did a good job with the Yelninsky ledge. You were right then (meaning my report of July 30).

Zhukov has July 29 in the previous text, but the bottom line is that Stalin recognized him as right. About Yelnya or about Kyiv? Rather, the first, but Zhukov does not have complete clarity. He was called, however, for a completely different reason: the leader decided to send him to replace Voroshilov in the defense of Leningrad.

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"The Supreme Commander silently took a notebook from the table and wrote something in a sweeping firm handwriting. Having folded the sheet, he handed it to me: "Personally hand this note to Comrade Voroshilov." The note read: "Give command of the front to Zhukov, and you yourself immediately fly to Moscow ..."

The conversation turned to Kyiv affairs:

- Things are going badly for Budyonny in the South-West direction. We decided to replace it. Who do you think should be sent there?

— Marshal Timoshenko has recently gained a lot of practice in organizing military operations, and he knows Ukraine well. I recommend sending it," I replied.

"Perhaps you are right. And who will we instruct instead of Tymoshenko to command the Western Front?

- Commander of the 19th Army, Lieutenant General Konev.

I.V. Stalin agreed with this as well. Immediately by phone, he instructed B.M. Shaposhnikov about summoning Marshal S.K. Timoshenko and the transfer of the order to I.S. Konev on taking command of the Western Front.

So, full recovery. Zhukov's prestige has been restored, the Supreme Commander now consults with him regarding appointments, even in the case of the former Zhukovsky patron Timoshenko. The only trouble is that this is not a memory, but fiction.

Let's start with the date. Zhukov was not at Stalin's on September 9th. In the Journal of Visitors, his last name is again not mentioned for this date. The whole sequence of events is distorted intentionally. Zhukov writes that he flew to Leningrad from the Central Airfield of Moscow on September 10, but General Fedyuninsky, who was with him on the plane, recalls that it was on the 13th (p. 42):

"On the morning of September 13, the Li-2 plane took off from the Vnukovo airfield and, under the protection of a flight of fighters, headed for Leningrad. On the plane were General of the Army G.K. Zhukov, appointed commander of the Leningrad Front, Generals M.S. Khozin, P.I. Kokoreviya.

Admiral Kuznetsov has the same date (Zeayup, p. 113). Vasilevsky: "Georgy Konstantinovich willingly accepted this decision and, having taken command of the troops of this front on September 13, with his characteristic energy and perseverance, he set about strengthening the defense of the city" (p. 164).

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And here is an excerpt from Stalin's Visitor's Journal for | | September 1941: "1. Molotov 17.10-22.15 2. Zhukov 17.10-21.15 3. Malenkov 17.10-22.15 4. Timoshenko 17.10-22.00 Beria 17.10-21.40

8. Shaposhnikov 17.50-22.00 "

This list puts everything in its place. So, Zhukov was with Stalin not on the 9th, but | | September. By this time, the position of the Southwestern Front near Kiev was very bad. On the morning of the 10th, Guderian struck at the 40th Army and cut it in half by the end of the day. The front command saw no other choice but to retreat. A desperate telegram went to Headquarters (Bagramyan, p. 325):

"The enemy tank group broke through to Romny, Graivoron. The 40th and 21st armies cannot liquidate this group. The immediate deployment of troops from the Kyiv fortified area in the path of enemy movement and the general withdrawal of front troops to the lines reported to you are required. I ask permission on the radio.

At two o'clock in the morning (the 11th had already arrived), Kirponos called Shaposhnikov to a direct wire. The answer was negative:

"The Headquarters of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief believes that it is necessary to continue fighting in the positions occupied by units of the Southwestern Front, as provided for by our charters."

Kirponos received some advice from the chief of the General Staff, but Shaposhnikov did not allow a single division to be taken from the Kyiv fortified area. The Komfronta, in desperation, turned to his immediate superior, Commander-in-Chief of the Administration, Budyonny, who was in Poltava. He contacted Shaposhnikov, but also did not achieve anything. Then Budyonny sent the following telegram to Headquarters; it was on the 11th at 8.15 am (Bagramyan, pp. 326-327):

"The Military Council of the Southwestern Front believes that in the current situation it is necessary to allow the general withdrawal of the front to the rear line ... For my part, I believe that to

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At this time, the enemy's plans for enveloping and encircling the Southwestern Front from Novgorod-Seversky to the south from Kremenchug to the north were completely outlined. To counteract this plan, it is necessary to create a strong group of troops. The Southwestern Front is unable to do this.

If the Headquarters of the High Command, in turn, does not have the opportunity to concentrate such a strong group at the moment, then a withdrawal for the Southwestern Front is quite overdue ... As a last resort, if the issue of withdrawal cannot be reconsidered, I ask permission to withdraw at least if there were troops and rich equipment from the Kiev UR, these forces and means will certainly help the Southwestern Front to counteract the encirclement."

As we can see, Zhukov greatly redrawn events. Stalin could not tell him that Timoshenko would arrive in two days, Zhukov and Timoshenko were admitted to Stalin at the same time at 17:10. It means that Zhukov could not recommend Timoshenko to Poltava. Stalin therefore summoned him to him because he decided to appoint him instead of Budyonny. | | September, Stalin was not going to leave Kyiv. Obedient to him, Shaposhnikov twice forbade Kirponos to retreat. On the evening of September 1, the Supreme Commander confirmed this refusal in the infamous conversation over a direct wire (teletype) with Kirponos. Unfortunately, we do not know the exact time. According to the visitor's log, Zhukov left Stalin at 21.15, Beria at 21.40, Shaposhnikov and Timoshenko at 22.00, Molotov and Malenkov at 22.15. Since Shaposhnikov and Timoshenko were present during the conversation with Kirponos, therefore, it was no later than 10 o'clock in the evening. Whether Zhukov was present at the same time cannot be said with certainty, but a deliberate distortion of the facts is obvious. I really wanted to portray myself as indispensable and clairvoyant.

Sequence of events

Descending from memoir heights to the sinful earth, we will give a brief sequence of real events. Over the years, many details, alas, moved into the archive.

In Halder's diary (p. 111) there is an interesting entry dated July 10:

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"The Commander-in-Chief called me on the phone. The Fuhrer contacted him again and expressed his extreme concern that the tank divisions would be sent to Kiev and suffer useless losses (in Kiev, 35% of the population are Jews; we still cannot capture the bridges)."

Without trying to look for a connection between the Kyiv bridges and the mentioned national minority, let us take note that in July, according to Hitler, Army Group South had insufficient forces to break through the Kiev fortified area. At the end of August the situation changed. On the 25th, Guderian, with his characteristic speed, moved to Kyiv. Very soon, his troops were stretched for tens of kilometers in depth and along the front; the motorized corps broke away from the infantry divisions. The Soviet command saw in this situation an opportunity to strike at this grouping. On August 30, Yeremenko's Bryansk Front received directive No. 001428 of the Supreme High Command to send four armies (50th, 3rd, 13th and 21st) on the offensive. On August 14, upon his appointment as Commander of the Front, Eremenko promised the Supreme Commander to defeat the "scoundrel Guderian" and 10 days later he repeated this promise ("I want to defeat Guderian and, of course, I will defeat him"). Ten rifle divisions, supported by tanks, attacked the Germans, but were only able to delay them for a week, at the cost of heavy losses.

Ominous clouds of inevitable encirclement have gathered over the Southwestern Front. Guderian was coming from the north, on the right he was covered by the 2nd Army of von Weichs. From the Kremenchug bridgehead on the left bank of the Dnieper, captured by von Stolpnagel's 17th army, Kleist's tank group was advancing. From the west, the 6th Army of von Reichenau pressed. Kirponos and his chief of staff Tupikov (the same one whose reports from Berlin irritated Beria) saw the only way out in an immediate retreat 180 km east across the Psel River. They themselves could not make such a decision and turned to the commander-in-chief of the Budyonny direction, but even he could only

appeal to Headquarters. Stalin, as we know, forbade the retreat. He ended the negotiations categorically: "... Do not leave Kyiv and do not blow up bridges without special permission from the Headquarters. Goodbye". In this world, Kirponos and Tupikov never met Stalin again.

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The stake continued to hope for a favorable outcome. On September 12, the commander of the Bryansk Front received Directive No. 00198 signed by Shaposhnikov:

"In the most urgent and decisive way: to put an end to the enemy grouping in the area of Shostka, Glukhov, Putivl, Konotop and unite with the troops of the South-Western Front, for which it is allowed to suspend the offensive in the Roslavl direction ...

The operation will start on September 14th. It is desirable to complete this operation and completely eliminate the breakthrough between the Bryansk and Southwestern fronts no later than [September 8 ... "

Contrary to these good wishes, the German pincers continued to shrink. At 3:25 a.m. on September 14, Tupikov sent to the General Headquarters and the Commander-in-Chief of the South-Western Direction his operational summary, routine in form, apocalyptic in meaning. It began like this: "The position of the troops of the front is becoming more complicated at an increasing pace." Then came depressing details, one worse than the other:

"a) The enemy, who has broken through to Romny (Lokhvitsa) and Northern Podil (Khorol), has not yet been opposed, except for local garrison and fighter detachments, and the advance is proceeding without resistance. The 279th and 7th divisions thrown into this direction will be only 14.9, and then only with

defensive tasks - to prevent the defense of the nodes of Piryatin and Priluki from striking at the uncovered rear of the troops of the front.

6) Kuznetsov's defense front was broken completely, and the army actually switched to mobile defense.

c) The [5th] Potapov's army is also unable to stabilize the front and is conducting a mobile defense. The enemy broke through to Kobyzhcha at the junction with the 37th Army.

d) The 37th Army resists more stably, but the situation in it is growing not in its favor.

e) Mixing of the rear of the e-th and 21st armies began. Now the front line is going: Gayvoron, Werder, Ivangorod, Sivolozh, Evlashovka, Verkievka, [rigorievka, Adamovka, Kobyzhcha, Danevka, Valevachi and further along the Desna and the Dnieper.

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f) The troops of the 21st and 2nd armies, being unable to hold back the enemy, retreat to the junction of the troops of the 37th and 26th armies.

The final phrase of the report became winged: "The beginning of a catastrophe that you understand is a matter of a couple of days."

The recipients of the telegram at Headquarters were incorrigible optimists. The answer of the Chief of the General Staff (as they say, under the dictation of Stalin) was as follows:

"To the Commander of the South-Western Front, a copy to the Commander-in-Chief of the South-Western Front. Major General Tupikov submitted a panic report to the General Staff. The situation, on the contrary, requires the preservation of exceptional composure and restraint of commanders at all levels. It is necessary, without succumbing to panic, to take all measures to keep the position occupied and to hold the flanks especially firmly. Kuznetsov (21A) and Potapov (5A) must be forced to stop their retreat. It is necessary to inspire the entire composition of the front with the need to fight stubbornly, without looking back, it is necessary to follow the instructions of Comrade. Stalin given to you on 11.9. Shaposhnikov.

Kirponos refused to sign Tupikov's report quoted above, but on the same day he asked permission to move his command post from Pryluky to Kyiv. The idea was to pull all the troops to the city and conduct military operations, relying on the local fortifications. The answer of the Chief of the General Staff was negative:

"Without the permission of the Commander-in-Chief of the YuZN, the command post from Priluka cannot be transferred. In case of emergency, move the command post closer to the troops..."

Timoshenko did not allow the transfer of the command post.

On September 15, Shaposhnikov and Timoshenko conferred by teletype from 17.40 to 19.00. The Chief of the General Staff said a significant phrase:

"I believe that the mirage of encirclement covers, first of all, the Military Council of the Southwestern Front, and then the commander of the 37th Army."

To the question of what last instructions were given to Kirponos, Timoshenko replied:

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"Holding the defense with a retreat across the Dnieper River in case of such a need; the release of part of the forces to parry attacks ... Organize defense directly on the outskirts of Kyiv, having the main forces on the eastern coast.

Shaposhnikov asked the commander-in-chief to once again confirm these instructions to Kirponos. Timoshenko promised to do this through Bagramyan, who was then at the headquarters of the commander-in-chief in Akhtyrka.

On September 16, Guderian's advanced command post was in Romny. In the evening, his troops "joined up with Kleist's tank group" (Guderian, p. 396) at the Lokhvitsa-Lubny sector [50 km east of Kyiv. The mirage of encirclement, which Shaposhnikov spoke about 24 hours ago, closed in a deadly ring around four Soviet armies: On the same day, the SS division "Reich" occupied Priluki.

On the morning of the 16th, Timoshenko realized that the enemy was "close to completing the encirclement of the main forces of the Southwestern Front." So he, in any case, told Moskalenko after the war (book | 1, p. 91). Through Bagramyan, mentioned above, an order was sent to Kirponos to withdraw the troops (Bagramyan, pp. 330-343). Tymoshenko:

"Today we will again try to talk to Moscow. I hope that we will be able to convince Headquarters. In the meantime, we will be negotiating, Kirponos and his headquarters should take advantage of the fact that the enemy does not yet have a continuous encirclement front.

And eat:

"Report, comrade Bagramyan, to General Kirponos that in the current situation the Military Council of the Southwestern Direction considers an organized withdrawal to be the only expedient solution for the troops of the Southwestern Front. Give the front commander my verbal order: leaving the Kiev fortified area and hiding behind small forces along the Dnieper, immediately begin the withdrawal of the main forces to the rear defensive line.

Khrushchev, who served as a commissar under Budyonny and remained under Timoshenko, claimed during his time in power that it was he who made the decision to withdraw the troops. This version was obediently inscribed in the history of the war, but later the fact was not confirmed. Let us return, however, to real events.

Further Bagramyan writes: "I breathed a sigh of relief. There is hope that all is not yet lost. Soon he was overcome

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doubts: the order is paramount, but no documents, no paper trail. If the Headquarters does not support this idea, Kir Ponos may share the fate of Pavlov. Due to bad weather, Bagramyan flew to Kyiv on the 17th. Kirponos' reaction was predictable: "I can't do anything until I get the document. The question is too serious. - And slammed his palm on the table: - That's it! Let's end this." On the evening of September 17, a radiogram was sent to Moscow with the following content:

"Commander-in-Chief Timoshenko, through the deputy chief of staff of the front, transmitted an oral instruction: the main task is to withdraw the armies of the front to the Psel River with the defeat of the enemy's mobile groups in the directions to Romny, Lubny. Leave a minimum of forces to cover the Dnieper and Kyiv.

The written directives of the commander-in-chief do not at all give instructions to retreat to the Psel River and allow only part of the forces to be taken from the Kyiv UR. There is a contradiction. What to do? I think that the withdrawal of front troops to the Psel River is correct. Under this condition, it is necessary to completely leave the Kiev fortified region, Kyiv and the Dnieper River. We urgently ask for your instructions."

Tupikov showed Bagramyan a map with the latest data:

"There was no continuous front line. Huge gaps gaped everywhere, like wounds on a living body, testifying that in those areas there was no one to stand in the way of the enemy. And where else did the red line of our troops stretch, what is there? The latest combat reports say: there are battles not for life, but for death.

On the night of September 18, Shaposhnikov answered the radiogram. The Headquarters allowed "to leave the Kiev fortified area and transport the troops of the 37th Army to the left bank of the Dnieper." Bagramyan:

"Again, not a word about the withdrawal of the main forces of the front to the rear line. But here the very logic of events suggested a solution. If we leave Kyiv and its fortified area with powerful defensive structures, then there is no hope that the troops will hold out on the unequipped lines east of the city. Even Burmistenko, who before that had never thought of leaving Kyiv, said at a meeting with the commander:

"I think that in this situation there is nothing left for us but to fulfill the order of the commander-in-chief."

Only after that Kirponos gave the order to withdraw from the encirclement. 5th Army M.I. Potapova, 21st V.I. Kuznetsova, 26th F.Ya. Kostenko and 37th A.A. Vlasov had to break through

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to the East. The 38th Army (N.V. Feklenko) and the 40th (K.P. Podlas), who were outside the pocket, were ordered to provide support with a strike on Romny and Lubny. The decision came too late. "The front headquarters was in the line of fire; communication with the armies was lost, the troops were dismembered and, except for units of the 26th and 37th armies, they practically no longer represented a real combat force" (Moskalenko, p. 92). The desperate attacks of the Soviet troops forced Guderian to move his headquarters from Romen back to Konotop on September 19, but this was little consolation.

On the same day, Kyiv fell. The 4th division of the NKVD, which was the last to leave, mined the city center, blew up bridges across the Dnieper and other important objects, the city was left without power supply. On September 26 the battle was over.

Kirponos ended up with a group of no more than a thousand people, including 800 officers. They fiercely fought back from the advancing Germans. The front commander was killed by a mine fragment on September 20 (according to other sources, he committed suicide). Tupikov and Chief of Staff of the 5th Army D.S. Pisarevsky. A member of the Military Council E., who fell into the hands of the Germans, was tortured [1. Rykov. Army Commander Potapov was seriously wounded and taken prisoner.

Only a small part of the Soviet troops escaped from the bag. Moskalenko left on September 27 with the remnants of the 15th Rifle Corps, the 164th and 196th Rifle Divisions. He also names some others (book [, p. 74):

"With small groups of soldiers and officers, the commander of the 26th Army, Lieutenant General F.Ya., also broke out of the encirclement. Kostenko, head of the operational department of the Southwestern Front, Major General I.Kh. Bagramyan, corps commanders Major General A.I. Lopatin and P.P. Korzun, brigade commander F.F. Zhmachenko and many others.

The catastrophe of the South-Western Front was even worse than the Byelorussian one. Soviet statistics were hidden for a long time, made public many years after the events. It is given in several variants, which are difficult to compare. Here is one of them: on September 1, the front (without reserves, spare parts and rears) had 752-760 thousand people, 3923 guns and mortars, 114 tanks and 167 combat aircraft. 452.7 thousand people, 2642 guns, 1225 mortars, 64 tanks got into the boiler. By October 2, almost 15,000 people left the encirclement. Here is a friend

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goi: 43 divisions (26 rifle, | cavalry, 4 motorized infantry, 13 tank) took part in the operation, with a total number of 627 thousand people; losses amounted to 586 thousand, including 532 thousand irretrievable and 54 thousand sanitary.

According to data published in 1993 by the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, the Red Army lost over 700 thousand people in the Kyiv operation, of which 627.3 thousand were irretrievable.

According to German sources, by September 24, 665,000 people had been taken prisoner near Kiev. This figure, along with the prisoners of the Southwestern Front, also included those who were taken on the Bryansk Front in August and September 1941.

Few of these Red Army soldiers survived captivity. The Germans experienced difficulties in supplying food to their troops, the share of prisoners of war was miserable crumbs. Here is an example from the messages of the 17th field army: the prisoners were led on foot through Lubny and Khorol to the Uman region. Distance 400 km, 30-40 km per day, daily ration - 20 g of bread and 100 g of food.

What's left to say? In the last lifetime edition of his memoirs, Zhukov assured the reader that Stalin was a high-class strategist: "I can firmly say that I.V. Stalin mastered the basic principles of organizing front-line operations and operations of groups of fronts and led them with skill, was well versed in big strategic issues" (quoted from the fifth edition, vol. 2, p. 96). Words in italics are not in the 2002 edition. The score is high, even in the corrected form. Unfortunately, Kirponos and Tupikov and those unknown hundreds of thousands, whom Stalin killed in vain near Kiev, could not express their opinion.

HITLER'S STRATEGIC BALLET

The defeat of the Soviet troops near Kiev was a significant operational victory for Hitler, achieved, moreover, despite the objections of Brauchitsch and others. The Führer's inner circle became even stronger in their faith in his military genius. In a short time, he added a new enterprise to his general laurels by sending a Kleist panzer group and

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Manstein's 11th Army to the Osipenko area on the Sea of Azov, where they surrounded and defeated two Soviet armies, in addition took 106,000 prisoners. This time, Hitler was dissuaded by his most loyal supporters.

All these achievements only raised the self-confidence of the German leader. As for the strategic results, the picture was not so rosy, although at that time there were no people who wanted to unfold it in front of Hitler. And no one would undertake to blame him for the lack of logical clarity and consistency.

Even earlier, on September 5, the Führer decided that after the capture of Kyiv, the main task would be an offensive in the Moscow direction. Allow me, the attentive reader will say, because only two weeks earlier, the successful advance of Army Group Center on Moscow was stopped when the German troops were in Smolensk, only 300 km from the Soviet capital. At that time, almost all the tanks were taken from von Bock - four of the five tank corps. Army Group Center remained inactive for almost two months. It is difficult to understand such logic. A possible explanation is that Hitler adhered to the strategic priorities originally written down in the Barbarossa plan. Therefore, on August 23, he confirmed that Ukraine with Donbass, Leningrad and Crimea are more important goals than Moscow. Two weeks later, the Moscow direction was suddenly recognized as a priority. You might think that Hitler belatedly succumbed to the arguments of his generals.

Part of the tanks of the Army Group Center was temporarily transferred to the Leningrad region, where the Germans' successes were more than modest. The Allied Finns kept their troops under the separate command of Marshal Mannerheim and refused to cross the 1939 border, they only claimed the lost territories. Hitler, for his part, made another strange decision. Army Group North received an order to abandon the capture of Leningrad. The city should have been wiped off the face of the earth with the help of bombardments, shelling and fires. To this end, it should have been bypassed from the east and moved to the Svir River. Hoth's tank group, taken from von Bock, was to take part in this maneuver (Zeafof. TVe Vae Yug Mosso, pp. 57-8).

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Be that as it may, Hitler's directive No. 35 of September 6 prescribed:

"Only after Timoshenko's army group is defeated by these carefully coordinated destruction operations with the help of dense encirclement, will our army group Center be able to move on Moscow with the left flank on the Oka and the right flank on the Volga."

Zhukov (The failure of the Nazi offensive... p. 16) depicts the plans of the Germans somewhat differently:

"Hitler, by directive of September 16 (should be read on the 6th. - V.R.), set the Army Group Center the task of breaking through the defenses of the Soviet troops, encircling and destroying the main forces of the Western, Reserve and Bryansk fronts and then, pursuing the remnants of these troops, to cover Moscow from the south and north and take it.

The language in Hitler's directive is bombastic and not very specific, but the meaning is different. The envelopment and capture of Moscow is not mentioned, so far it is a question of taking the direction to Moscow after the defeat of Timoshenko's troops. It's not the same thing. But Zhukov really wants to exaggerate to make his actions to defend Moscow look better.

By the way, when evaluating the strategic decisions of the enemy, he often hits the sky with his finger. Here, in particular, is his analysis of the situation at the end of July 1941: "The enemy suffered heavy losses in the Moscow and Kiev directions" (p. 349). Therefore, de Hitler cannot now attack in all directions and will go to Kyiv. It is not difficult to make such retrospective predictions, but at the same time, Zhukov deliberately misleads the reader. The total losses of the German troops at this time were low, by Zhukovsky standards - ridiculous. Here are the numbers. The entire Eastern Front on July 16 - 102 thousand killed and wounded, 3% of the total. As for Army Group Center, as of August 2, the total number of disabled (killed, wounded and sick) was 74.5 thousand people (Halder, pp. 161] and 229).

It remains to make strategic remarks. It is often said that due to the decision to capture Kyiv, Hitler lost the opportunity to take Moscow in the summer or early autumn of 1941. This is very, very likely. Now about something else. Directive No. 35 set new goals that were not included in the Barba

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Ross". Moreover, this plan could actually be considered complete. A huge territory was conquered, impressive victories were won, millions of enemy soldiers were taken prisoner. But the main goal was not achieved: the Red Army continued to resist. For sober minds on the German side, there could be only one conclusion: a long war on two fronts, which everyone, including the Fuhrer, wanted to avoid, became a reality.

BATTLE OUTSIDE MOSCOW (OPERATION "TYPHOON")

Start

The Fuhrer's directive No. 35 of September 6 determined the offensive in the Moscow direction - Operation Typhoon. The commander of Army Group Center, von Bock, issued the corresponding order on 26 September. Task: destruction of the Western and Bryansk fronts with subsequent access to the Middle Volga. Moscow is only mentioned as a possible target for aviation. There was no time for the rest of the troops, maintenance and repair of equipment. Master Song warned against sending warriors into battle immediately after a long march, but Corporal Hitler had no interest in the labors of an inferior race. He didn't read strategy papers at all, only picking up terms to impress.

Here it is worth making a general remark. Operation Typhoon was inherently risky. The reason is that it started in October. In Russian conditions, this meant that with great probability its implementation would somehow take over the winter period. This was contrary to the prerequisites laid down in the planning of the campaign in the East. This defied common sense and brought to mind the worst historical fears. All literate Germans, not only officers, knew what happened to the army of Napoleon, who was stuck in Russia for the winter. However, in Germany there was actually no public objection to this operation, which was associated with an unreasonable risk. The severity of the consequences did not decrease from this.

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Army Group Center received back its tank formations - Guderian's 2nd Panzer Group (it was soon renamed Panzer Army without adding anything to it) and Hoth's 3rd Panzer Group. The Center group was also temporarily assigned to the 4th G6pner Panzer Group. Total von Bock had at his disposal | | 929,000 troops, but this figure included quite a few support personnel; the fighting force was 78 divisions. Vasilevsky (p. 138) gives the following assessment:

"..the enemy concentrated 74.5 divisions numbering more than a million people, 1700 tanks and assault guns, over 14 thousand guns and mortars, 950 combat aircraft."

The Germans were opposed by three Soviet fronts: the most numerous Western (Konev, 558 thousand), behind it the Reserve (Budyonny, 448 thousand) and on the left Bryansk (Eremenko, 244 thousand). In total, the combat troops of these fronts at the end of September, according to Soviet data, numbered 1,250,000 men, 990 tanks, 7,600 guns and mortars, and 677 aircraft. After [September 12, Stalin abolished the Western direction and took these fronts under his hand.

The operation began with Guderian's actions on the southern (right) flank of the Center group. He had 15 and a half divisions, including 5 tank and 4 motorized infantry. On September 28, he struck at the junction of the Bryansk and Southwestern fronts and, contrary to expectations, met with fierce resistance. We had to regroup forces and attack in the Glukhov area a day later. Here he was successful, despite pockets of resistance and the presence of new Soviet T-34 and KV tanks. The Germans went to Orel, located deep in the rear of the Bryansk front of Eremenko, almost 200 km from Guderian's starting position. On October 3, the German 24th Panzer Corps, without encountering resistance, entered the city, which continued to live a peaceful life. Shops were open, trams were running through the streets, there were a lot of passers-by everywhere, and the dismantling of equipment continued at enterprises. On October 6, the 47th Panzer Corps captured Bryansk, where there were many Soviet troops and warehouses.

Guderian was bombarded with conflicting orders. He suspected that their source was not the command of Army Group Center, but Hitler's headquarters - "Wolf's Lair" near Rastenburg in East Prussia. He is instructed

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whether: a) to destroy the Bryansk front of Eremenko (100-150 km to the west), b) to take Kursk (150 km to the south) and iv) to go to Tula (150 km to the northeast). All these orders had to be carried out immediately. When asked in what order, there was no answer. Forces had to be divided: one tank corps went to Bryansk, the second was sent towards Kursk, only the 24th tank corps remained in the Tula direction, which was located near Mtsensk, waiting for the delivery of fuel. On October 6, it was unexpectedly attacked by Soviet tanks, mainly T-34 and KV. It was the 1st tank brigade of Katukov, which the Headquarters threw in front of the advancing Guderian. The Germans suffered serious losses. The delay was temporary, but Guderian's tankers were not used to this.

Moscow, which was closely following Guderian's advance, completely overlooked the attacks of the other two tank groups. They went on the offensive on October 2: Göpner's group in the center, Gotha's group in the north. Both Konev and Budyonny were taken by surprise by the German offensive. To make matters worse, they soon lost contact with Headquarters and their own troops, as field communication lines were damaged by heavy bombing that same day. Communications chief Konev writes in his memoirs (see Psurtsev):

"All communication lines were put out of action, ... the destruction of communication lines was so great that communication began to be restored only in the morning. Throughout the day of October 3, the army was controlled by liaison officers on U-2 planes and motor vehicles. The radio stations of the army headquarters did not answer the call of the front.

Communication with Moscow was also constantly out of order: German aircraft bombed the railway and the Moscow-Smolensk highway, and the wires ran along the road. The wires were also torn from the firing of our anti-aircraft guns located along the highway.

On October 4, the Soviet radio interception service sent to Headquarters a report on Hitler's speech, which mentioned the offensive of the German troops. The document caused surprise, nothing more. The next day, the first small groups of military personnel of the Reserve Front appeared in Maloyaroslavets, who reported on the German offensive. Reported to the Military Council of the Moscow District, they did not believe it (Provadl... p. 59):

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"This was regarded as alarmism by individual rear servicemen, because no information was received about the enemy's offensive against the Western and Reserve fronts."

Then the aviators reported: "The pilots who returned from loitering saw a column of enemy tanks and motorized infantry, up to 25 kilometers long, moving towards Yukhnov." This time, Telegin, the political commissar of the Military Council, telephoned Shaposhnikov. Now the chief of the General Staff did not believe it. There were two more reconnaissance flights - the picture is the same. Only after that Telegin again contacted Shaposhnikov, who reluctantly reported to Stalin (Telegin, p. 54). These last details were published only in 1988.

Shtemenko does not touch on this episode, but gives a general assessment of the connection between the Headquarters and [the General Staff with the fronts (vol. I, p. 19):

"One of the bottlenecks was communication with the fronts, primarily with the Western one. She was very unstable. Due to frequent communication interruptions, we did not always know the situation with the necessary details. The headquarters of the fronts also complained about the unsatisfactory state of communication with their troops. [Therefore, even if we were able to contact them, we still did not receive sufficiently complete information about the situation of the troops."

The position of the Soviet troops in the Moscow direction almost instantly became critical. In a few days, the Germans outflanked the Soviet fronts or passed between them. As a result, two pockets were formed, in which 6 Soviet armies ended up. The defeat was heavy, to match the Kiev. The commander of the 20th Army, M.F. Lukin (Zhukov appointed him on the radio to command the entire encircled Vyazma group) begged the neighboring 16th Army to give him at least one division, to which Commissar Lobachev replied: "We are generals without an army." It was true, at that time the Germans were tearing the 16th Army apart. Komandarm-16 Rokossovsky with his headquarters managed to break through to the east. Lukin was less fortunate: on October 14, he was seriously wounded, resulting in the amputation of his leg, and was taken prisoner. He rejected Vlasov's proposals for cooperation with the Germans, survived, returned home in 1945 and, fortunately, was not repressed, but that's another story.

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On October 12, the commander of the Bryansk Front, Eremenko, was wounded by a fragment of a bomb; they managed to take him by plane to Moscow. Commander-50 General M.P. Petrov died of gangrene in a forest hut. Seven divisions of his army, divided into groups of 2-3 thousand people, broke out to the north-west near Belev on the Oka. The troops of the front put up stubborn resistance, they were able to tie down part of the infantry and tanks of the enemy for about two weeks. Inside the cauldron, many of those who managed to escape capture went to partisans in the nearby dense forests; they gave the Germans a lot of trouble.

According to German data, 663,000 people were captured near Vyazma, and 100,000 near Bryansk; in addition, these boilers cost the Soviet side 263,000 dead and wounded and 95,000 in need of hospitalization. The defeat of the Reserve Front of Budyonny was especially difficult. In a short period from October 2 to October 10, the total losses reached an astronomical figure: 188 thousand 761 people - [7 thousand 160 people per day! The Germans lost 145,000 killed and wounded. After these victories, Hitler's strategic thinking completely lost touch with reality. He kept insisting that the German troops should reach the Arkhangelsk-Middle Volga-Astrakhan line by the beginning of winter. Moscow still had no value in his eyes - neither as a cultural and industrial center, nor as a railway junction, nor as a place for the winter deployment of troops. In the Führer's imagination, Stalin no longer had troops in the European part of the country, so the war was effectively over. Speaking on the radio on October 3 to mark the opening of the Winter Aid campaign, Hitler proclaimed that "the enemy has already been crushed and will never rise again." He ordered the disbandment of several reserve divisions and also instructed some sectors of industry to return to the production of civilian products (see Soey2, p. 401).

October 7 [Hitler gave an order regarding Moscow, similar to Leningrad: "German troops must surround the city and starve it to death. Not a single German soldier should enter the city until hunger and disease have done their work" (Zezfop. Tne VaShe Gog Mossom, p. 63). On June 30, Hitler warned against the capture of Moscow by tanks without masses.

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supported by the infantry, the experience of losses during the capture of Warsaw affected.

Zhukov does not mention this setting anywhere, neither do Soviet historians of the war. According to the Fuhrer's plan, Guderian was to advance around Moscow along the Mtsensk-Tula axis. After the liquidation of the Bryansk pocket, the 2nd Army of von Weichs was supposed to cross the mentioned axis and move from Orel in the direction of Voronezh, located 300 km from the capital. In the center of the German formations, von Kluge's 4th Army and Hoepner's 4th Panzer Group were ordered to march on Moscow in order to bypass the city from the north and south. Finally, Strauss' 9th Army and Hoth's 3rd Panzer Group were to move from Vyazma in the direction of Kalinin and Valdai with further access to Yaroslavl. Von Bock was against such a dispersion of his forces, but he could not do anything about it. All he had to do was register his protest on paper. Soviet sources do not mention Hitler's plan.

Now let's see how Zhukov describes the beginning of Operation Typhoon (Failure... p.16):

"At the end of September, Soviet intelligence discovered that the enemy was preparing for a major offensive operation in the Moscow direction. The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command warned the front commanders about this and demanded that preparations be made for a stubborn defense.

From this statement it follows that the main culprit of the ensuing misfortunes is the commander of the Western Front, Konev. The real situation was different. On September 20, Konev reported to Headquarters about German preparations, but they waited there for a whole week before they declared a state of combat readiness, while the troops were ordered to stand still - there was no need, that in previous battles static defense cost the Red Army The army is very expensive. Apparently, Stalin and Shaposhnikov did not believe that the Germans would undertake anything serious in October; the front commanders seemed to think the same way. The commission, consisting of Voroshilov, Molotov and Vasilevsky, which immediately arrived on the spot to investigate (the Soviet government never suffered from a lack of investigators - even in the most difficult moments!), found no fault with Konev, but recommended that the Reserve and Western fronts and posts

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to lead Zhukov. On October 10, the Stavka (Stalin, Shaposhnikov) carried out the indicated reorganization. Zhukov wrote in his memoirs that Stalin wanted to try the former commander Konev, but at the suggestion of him, Zhukov, he decided that for the good of the cause it would be better to appoint Konev as Zhukov's deputy in exchange for execution. Reminds a joke of a later time: Beria reports to Stalin that they caught the leader's double, looks like two peas in a pod. - What did you do with him, shot him? — The order was to shave off the mustache. - Could be so.

It seems that Zhukov took credit for the mission of saving Konev. Vasilevsky actually refutes it in his memoirs:

"All of us, including Colonel General Konev, agreed with Stalin's proposal to appoint General of the Army Zhukov, who by that time was in the troops of the Reserve Front, as commander of the united front."

Let us return, however, to the situation at the front. Two pages below we read from Zhukov about the immediate strengthening of the Mozhaish line of defense:

"On October 7, the transfer of 14 rifle divisions, 16 tank brigades, more than 40 artillery regiments and a number of other units from the Stavka reserves and from neighboring fronts began to this line. Of course, these forces were clearly not enough to create, but then the Stavka did not have great opportunities, and the transfer of troops from the Far East and other remote regions of the country was late.

A short quote is loaded and overloaded with meaning. First of all, Zhukov's character is visible: he is always short of resources. Entry from Yeremenko's diary: "Zhukovskoye operational art is five or six times superior in strength, otherwise he will not get down to business ...". The question arises: why did Stalin, who knew about the impending German offensive, limit himself to a formidable call, but did not send the mentioned reinforcements to Moscow in advance? After all, 14 divisions is, at the very least, 100 thousand people, a lot of help at a critical moment. And how did it happen that the German offensive caught the Supreme by surprise?

Separately, it is worth mentioning the Far Eastern troops, which came into use under the name "Siberian divisions". For the delay in bringing them up is another illustration of Stalin's hopeless dilettantism. Maintenance of large military

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contingents on the far eastern borders, even before June, did not look very reasonable, and after the outbreak of hostilities - simply unreasonable. From Moscow to Kyiv is approximately 800 km, and to Vladivostok - 10 thousand. In 1941, the likelihood of a Japanese attack was low: they had just signed a non-aggression pact in April, and intelligence reported that their aggressive aspirations were directed south, towards the Pacific Ocean. Even in the worst case, one does not need to be Clausewitz or Svechin to understand that the loss of Ukraine and other European regions is many times worse and more dangerous than the loss of uninhabited spaces of the taiga. |

In Moscow

According to Zhukov, by the end of October 7, all roads to Moscow were open to the Germans. That day he was with Stalin, who, in his presence, gave the following order to Beria, who was in his office (Pavlenko, pp. 268-269):

"Try through your channels to probe the ground for concluding a new Brest Peace with [Germany. Let's agree to give up the Baltic States, Belarus, Moldova and part of Ukraine - on any terms ... "

The Bulgarian ambassador in Moscow, Stamenov, undertook to act as a mediator, but the Fuhrer did not want to negotiate, in anticipation of the imminent and inevitable collapse of the Soviet empire. The fact of this Stalinist initiative was confirmed twice: in 1953 by Stamenov himself and in 1989 by an embassy employee, Dimitar Peev (Moscow News, 1989, June 25).

On October 12, Hitler issued an order regarding Moscow, similar to the Leningrad one: do not enter the city, surround and starve the population (DetkKe. Mozso \ 10 Zalpetaa, +. 1, p37).

On October 13, fierce battles flared up on the outskirts of Moscow. The Soviet elite did not believe that the capital could be defended, so they decided to urgently evacuate the main central institutions (the Central Committee, the Council of People's Commissars, the General Staff, the NKVD) and the entire diplomatic corps to Kuibyshev and Arzamas; in addition, especially important state valuables were taken away. Fears reached their apogee when Kalinin (Tver) fell on October 14th. On the 16th, the famous panic broke out in Moscow. Nomenclature

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Ra quickly loaded onto trains and burned documents, residents emptied stores, stocking up on the few that were still available. Robberies swept through the city, anti-Soviet cries and calls to beat the Jews were heard. The militia was inactive (Vga! P\maNe, pp. 212-234).

Beria and the NKVD at that time worked tirelessly. On October 16, about 300 people were shot, mostly military men in high ranks - there were no means for their evacuation. Pavlenko (p. 274) calls this order criminal: "In the combat areas near Moscow at that time, lieutenants commanded the regiments." Alas, there were many such actions. On the same day, they did not forget to deal with the wives of the victims of 1937: they executed Nina Uborevich and Nina Tukhachevskaya (Blum Gamarnik and Ekaterina Kork were shot in July). They were buried near the Kommunarka state farm near Moscow. When, 10 years later, I started attending the Kommunarskaya secondary school, we had no idea that there was a terrible place allotted for the burial of victims of the NKVD very close by.

On October 17, a group of 28 military men was taken from Moscow to Kuibyshev. There were many aviators there. Four of them [heroes of the Soviet Union: Yakov Smushkevich (twice), Pavel Rychagov, Alexander Loktionov, Ivan Proskurov, all were behind the deputies of the People's Commissar of Defense, the first three were commanders of the Air Force, Proskurov was the head of the Intelligence Directorate. Among those expelled was the former air defense commander Grigory Stern, who in 1939 commanded the Trans-Baikal District and was the head of Zhukov at Khalkhin Gol. The group consisted of four women, including the famous pilot Maria Nesterenko-Rychagova. On October 18, Beria, by order No. 2756 / B, decided the fate of these prisoners. On October 28, they were shot in the village of Barbysh near Kuibyshev. The task of the party and the government was carried out by glorious security officers: major, later major general, Bashtekov (participant in the Katyn action), major Rhodes and senior lieutenant Semenikhin.

By the evening of October 19, Stalin and his entourage realized that their fears about the rapid fall of Moscow were premature. Gathered a meeting. First of all, at the suggestion of the head of the Moscow defense zone, General of the NKVD P.A. Artemiev, a state of siege was declared (no one explained why this was not done earlier; they probably forgot, lost sight of it). WHO

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updated patrolling the city. Now the NKVD, police and troops could crack down on alarmists, saboteurs, provocateurs and spies right on the spot. They ordered to strengthen discipline in the troops, at the same time bring money to Moscow and distribute salaries in advance.

Hundreds of the most important objects were mined in Moscow. By the Decree of the State Defense Committee of October 15 "in the event of the appearance of the enemy at the walls of Moscow" on vols. Shcherbakov (Secretary of the Moscow Committee) and Beria were charged with responsibility for "the explosion of enterprises, warehouses and institutions that cannot be evacuated, as well as all electrical equipment of the metro (excluding water supply and sewerage)". This last reservation reveals concern for the millions of Muscovites who remained in the city. Stalin initially also planned to leave for evacuation, and the dacha in Kuntsevo was mined. While it was cleared, the leader had to sit by the phone in a cold summer house.

On October 23, the Moscow City Court and the people's courts were turned into a Military Tribunal. This body had more than enough work to do: in November-December 1941, about 10 thousand people appeared before it, in the first quarter of 1942 - 21 thousand. Cases under Art. 98-[0 part 2 (counter-revolutionary agitation): from 168 to 727 (Gorinov, pp. 9-10). The system worked with might and main.

At the end of October, at the suggestion of the Chairman of the Moscow Council V.P. Pronin, approved by Stalin, food supplies, mainly flour and grain, began to be exported from the capital to the east. Perishable foodstuffs were thrown into shops (BraHB/aHe, p. 233). In the spring of 1942, food shortages would become the main concern for Muscovites (ibid., p. 24).

On the outskirts of the capital

Let's return to the situation at the front. Military operations in the Moscow direction in October and November 1941 are described many times, but not always accurately. The reader will not be hindered by caution and a dose of skepticism.

Soviet reports are laden with the epithet "heroic". Now and then come across long periods of heroic resistance or mass heroism of the Soviet troops under the wise hand

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leadership of Stalin, whose place after 1956 was taken by the Communist Party. These factors, or, if you like, historical forces stopped the German advance, saved Moscow and all mankind. Alas, it is difficult to agree with this. Of course,

in many places (not all), the Soviet troops showed great stamina. Too often it was the stamina of despair, they were forced to stand still under the annihilating onslaught of the enemy with poor communication and mediocre command. Soviet generals, in an effort to avoid the wrath of Stalin and higher authorities like Zhukov, heroically threw their soldiers under the tracks of German tanks. We have to admit that courage, heroism and senseless sacrifice alone could not have stopped the Germans, an example of which can be found in the descriptions of military operations near Minsk, Smolensk, Kiev, Vyazma and Bryansk. Other powerful factors intervened in the course of the war, namely, the autumn thaw, the poor organization of the supply of German troops, frosts and Hitler.

On the night of October 7, snow fell on the southern flank of the Center group, it did not lie on the ground, it was replaced by heavy rains. Very soon the roads and tank tracks turned into a liquid mess. The autumn thaw fell on the Germans, well known to the locals. I spent part of my childhood in the suburbs and experienced it for myself. Twice a year, in spring and autumn, we pulled on rubber boots and, in a state of calm doom, kneaded our native mud for weeks. The Nazi invaders did not have this fatalism and these boots. Getting bogged down in a sea of mud, they lost their shoes and faith in German superiority. Theoretically, the officers of the Wehrmacht knew in advance about the delights of the Russian seasonal off-road - from the memoirs of Caulaincourt and other books. However, when planning Operation Barbarossa, no measures were foreseen to overcome this natural phenomenon.

The only highway from Orel to Mtsensk quickly became impassable for wheeled vehicles. The bridges were blown up by the retreating Soviet troops, the approaches to them were mined. The 2nd Panzer Army was faced with the need to lay a log deck on the road to ensure the movement of trucks. By the 20th of October, the advanced divisions of this army were stretched out for 30-45 km. The infantry was often ahead of the tanks.

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Because of the lack of roads, the tactical and operational superiority of the German troops significantly decreased, almost melted away. T-34s had wider tracks and, compared to German tanks, had increased cross-country ability. The armor of the Soviet vehicles was thicker, the penetrating ability of the guns was higher. Quite often, one or two T-34 tanks, placed by the road, delayed the advance of the German column for a long time - until 88-mm anti-aircraft guns or 100-mm field guns were brought up. True, there were not very many "thirty-fours" yet.

In numerous Soviet sources, one can come across the phrase familiar to the Russian ear: "In October 1941, the Nazi hordes rushed to Moscow." Some Western authors express themselves in the same spirit (see, for example, Akhe!, p. 86). These statements do not quite correspond to reality. Hitler, as we know, forbade taking the city of Moscow. For this reason, a bizarre, paradoxical situation has developed. At a time when the Soviet side was making desperate efforts to delay the enemy, the main German forces were heading past Moscow towards the strategic goals set by the Fuhrer. Guderian, who captured Mtsensk on October 12, had to go to Tula, Ryazan and Gorky. Yaroslavl was the target of the 3rd Panzer Group Gotha. Only Göpner's 4th Panzer Group and von Kluge's 4th Field Army, which followed it, were heading for Moscow, and then with the aim of bypassing and encircling the city.

To the north of Guderian's army zone, the weather remained dry for some time: in the second week of October, frost hit there. The German offensive continued at an alarming rate. [October 3 German infantry reached the bridge across the Volga near Kalinin. The Red Army soldiers guarding the bridge and the sappers sent to blow it up fled. [The German tanks of the Gotha group proceeded to the other side of the river and the next day took the city. The news of this caused panic in Moscow.

Meanwhile, von Kluge's 4th Army and Hoepner's 4th Panzer Group were advancing on the Mozhaishk line of defense, preparing to break through it. This line was a formidable obstacle: a system of anti-tank ditches, camouflaged minefields and firing points, flamethrowers with remote control

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niem. Located 120-150 km from Moscow, it stretched in an arc from north to south - from the Ivankovo reservoir on the Volga along the river. Lama, further west from Volokolamsk and Mozhaishk almost to Kaluga. The zone consisted of four fortified regions with 10-15 battalion defense regions each. The total length of the main defensive zone exceeded 200 km. On October 11, the Germans took the town of Medyn on the Warsaw Highway, more than 40 kilometers west of Maloyaroslavets. Medyn was defended by the 17th Tank Brigade of Colonel Troitsky. Zhukov, who knew the brigade commander personally, had been here a few days before. There is evidence that later he conveyed Stalin's personal request to the defenders of Medyn to hold out for at least a few more days. There is no way to check this post.

Beginning on October 7, Soviet reinforcements continuously moved westward along the Mozhaishk Highway in an attempt to gain a foothold at a line 20 km east of Medyn. On the 13th, Kuntzen's 47th Panzer Corps, which was preparing to break through the Mozhaishk line, was suddenly attacked by Soviet forces with a large number of tanks and artillery. This was Golubev's 43rd Army, which had previously broken out of the encirclement near Bialystok. The 37 mm guns were powerless against the T-34 and KV, and the Germans had a hard time. They were able to regain their positions only after the appearance of Stuka dive bombers and 88-mm anti-aircraft guns.

On October 16, the Germans attacked with the forces of two divisions - the 19th Panzer and the 3rd Motorized Infantry. The Soviet defenders held firm at first, but faltered and retreated with heavy losses when they were attacked from the rear. It was the German infantry that got off the trucks and seeped through the line of fortifications. [German tanks with armored infantry rushed to the east. Before dark, they traveled almost 60 km and managed to capture Maloyaroslavets and Borovsk, as well as the bridge over Protva. On the way, German tankers saw thousands of people, mostly women, who continued to dig trenches. The next day, Golubev tried to recapture Borovsk, but was unsuccessful. On October 19, he had to completely abandon the fortified area near Maloyaroslavets; on the same day, the 9th Army left the Mozhaishk UR. Advanced

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parts of the 47th tank corps of the Germans continued to move towards the river. Nara. The next day, a thaw turned the freshly fallen snow into a mess. The speed of the tanks dropped sharply. Still, on the 24th they reached Nara and captured a bridgehead near Naro Fominsk. Soon three German infantry divisions pulled up to them.

The morale of the Soviet troops in this area was far from exemplary. Quite a few soldiers surrendered. Abandoned equipment and weapons lay everywhere. The Germans even used Soviet anti-tank guns. Nevertheless, a new counterattack followed on 25 October. However, it soon ended with an unexpected ending, when the Red Army ran into a large warehouse of alcohol. Thanks to this, the Germans in a couple of days captured 2,000 prisoners, most of them drunk or sleepy (Zeafof, Ba... p. 97).

Soon the weather in the north finally deteriorated. It rained for several days, and the German army sank deeper and deeper into the mud. One division reported that 16 horses were unable to move one howitzer. The infantry was still somehow moving, leaving tanks and motorized units behind. On October 20, the German infantry crossed the river. Ruza, meeting very little resistance [of the 6th Army of Rokossovsky, which lacked field artillery, although there was a lot of ammunition. Between October 24 and 26, it seemed that the entire Soviet defense system was about to fall apart. The 25th troops of Rokossovsky left the Volokolamsk UR. On the 27th, the city of Volokolamsk fell. The German 33rd infantry division, where instead of four regiments there were only two, and even those severely understaffed, covered 25 km over water-covered terrain in five days and took 1,800 prisoners. However, further advancement was impossible: weapons and ammunition were needed, supplies were needed. On October 31, the divisions were given a break for two weeks,

The Germans had almost no fuel and food rations. Wheeled vehicles often moved several kilometers a day. On the left flank of von Kluge's army, the Mozhaisk highway was a huge dumping ground for Soviet vehicles, and the air was filled with an unbearable stench from decomposing dead horses. When the highway was finally cleared, its surface was almost immediately shattered by the ceaseless flow of traffic. As a result, at

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approximately 2,000 trucks were stuck for a whole week, unable to move forward or back. By the end of October, the railway lines between Gzhatsk and Mozhaisk were shifted to the German gauge, but after being unloaded from the wagons, supplies remained at the stations for a very long time.

By the end of October, the German offensive had stopped, and a temporary lull had set in at the front. The weather is usually not mentioned in Soviet sources. Here is a typical example (Failure... p. 9): "The October offensive of the fascists against Moscow was shattered by the greatest steadfastness and endurance, the mass heroism of the soldiers of the Red Army and the population of the Moscow region. Under the leadership of the Central Committee of the party, the Moscow and Tula party organizations mobilized workers, collective farmers and intelligentsia to defend Moscow, who with their selfless work helped the Red Army in its fight against the enemy on the outskirts of the capital.

In addition to the weather and the stubborn resistance of the Soviet troops, the strategic overstrain also had an effect. Wehrmacht divisions were completed by 30-50%, only a third of motor vehicles remained on the move. The supply of supplies by rail was insufficient, because of this, mainly ammunition and fuel arrived (its consumption during the thaw was three times the norm); As for winter uniforms and building materials, they are hopelessly stuck on the way somewhere in Poland. With the delivery of supplies from the railway to the military units, the situation was quite bad. The 77 infantry divisions of the Eastern Front, almost half of the invasion forces, had exclusively horse-drawn vehicles. When fodder became scarce due to impassability, the German horses refused to eat straw. [The German units were forced to abandon their rubber-running carts, they used unpretentious horses and carts audited from local residents.

Zhukov during the calm period continued single counterattacks. When writing his memoirs, so to speak, in hindsight, he presented the matter as follows: in early November, in a telephone conversation, Stalin told him (vol. 2, p. 26):

"Shaposhnikov and I believe that it is necessary to thwart the enemy's impending strike with our own preemptive counterattacks.

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One counterattack should be launched around Volokolamsk from the north... In the Volokolamsk area, use the right-flank formations of the Rokossovsky army, a tank division and cavalry, which is located in the Klin area.

Zhukov allegedly objected, but Stalin threatened reprisals through Bulganin.

The telephone conversation with Stalin cited above is given without a date, it says only "at the beginning of November." Here is an extract from the Zhukovsky order from 1 November 1941:

"To carry out the defense as an active defense, combined with counterattacks. Do not wait for the enemy to strike himself. To go over to counterattacks ourselves This is how our Stalin teaches us.

This order, it seems, was given before the conversation with the Supreme. The point is that 11 November Zhukov was in Moscow on a call from Stalin - he consulted with him about the November 7 parade. Therefore, there was no need for them to talk on the phone. So, we cannot fully resolve this controversy. However, it is clear that Zhukov did not want to be held responsible for counterattacks near Moscow in mid-November, and the reader will soon understand why.

Be that as it may, these counterattacks took place (Zhukov, vol. 1, p. 27):

"A couple of hours later, the front headquarters gave an order to the commanders of the 16th and 49th armies and commanders of formations to conduct counterattacks, which we reported to Headquarters. However, these counterattacks, where the cavalry mainly acted, did not give the positive results that the Supreme Commander expected. The enemy was strong enough, and his offensive ardor had not yet cooled.

Saying “<... did not give those positive results”, the commander saved the reader from details. They are worth knowing.

On November 15, the commander of the 16th Army, Rokossovsky, attacked the 8th Panzer Division, which had just arrived from the Far East, in the area north of Volokolamsk. The division did not have time to conduct reconnaissance of the area and the location of the enemy. Advancing through the swamps, she lost a third of her personnel and almost all materiel (157 tanks out of 198).

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The army commander laid the blame for everything that had happened on the division commander, Colonel Kotlyarov. He put a bullet in his forehead. Here is his suicide note (Sokolov "Unknown Zhukov", p. 306):

“General disorganization and loss of control. The higher headquarters are to blame. I don't want to be responsible. Step back, Yamuga, behind an anti-tank obstacle. Save Moscow. Ahead without prospects”.

Nine times Rokossovsky threw the exhausted 8th Guards Division to Kryukovo - to no avail. He sent two cavalry divisions, the 44th and 1/2th, to the prepared German defenses. Both were destroyed almost completely, each had 3,000 cavalry. A description of the death of the 44th Cavalry Division has been preserved in the combat log of the German 4th Panzer Group; it was November 16 southwest of Klin. We read (quoted from: Sokolov "Unknown Zhukov", pp. 306-307):

“..I could not believe that the enemy intended to attack us on this wide field, intended only for parades ... But then three lines of horsemen moved towards us. Through the space illuminated by the winter sun, riders with shining blades rushed to the attack, bending down to the necks of their horses... The first shells exploded in the midst of the attackers... Soon a terrible black cloud hung over them. People and horses torn to pieces take off into the air... It is difficult to make out where the riders are, where the horses are... Crazy horses rushed about in this hell. A few surviving horsemen were finished off by artillery and machine gun fire ... ”

In this battle, more than 2 thousand horsemen found their death, there were no German losses. How could the cavalryman Rokossovsky in the open field send the cavalry to the tanks and guns, I do not presume to answer. In his memoirs, he does not talk about these battles.

The only success was achieved in the sector of the 112th Infantry Division. The Germans, having no anti-tank weapons, faltered in the face of the "thirty-fours" and turned into a stampede - a rare case in the German army that required a special investigation.

Here is how a modern Russian author assesses these attacks (Shaptalov, p. 154):

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“The counterattacks did not bring any sense, but several thousand additional funerals went to the families.”

In addition to suicidal counterattacks, the Soviet command, in an effort to stop the enemy at any cost, also used other means. One of them will be discussed in the next section.

Scorched earth tactics

It began with Stalin's speech on July 3:

“In the event of a forced withdrawal of units of the Red Army, it is necessary to steal the entire rolling stock, not to leave the enemy a single locomotive, not a single wagon, not to leave the enemy a kilogram of bread or a liter of fuel. The collective farmers must steal all the livestock. Bread should be handed over for safety to state bodies for its transportation to the rear areas. All valuable property, including non-ferrous metals, grain and fuel, which cannot be taken out, must, of course, be destroyed.”

Documents on how this directive was implemented were caulked in the archives for a long time. Now some have surfaced, it seems that this is just a small fraction. The following examples are taken from The Hidden Truth of War: 1941. Here is a document, one name is enough: Decree No. 0012 of the Military Council of the Western Front “On the organization of harvesting and liquidation of agricultural crops in the Smolensk region”, dated August 5, 1941, signed by Commander-in-Chief Timoshenko and a member of the Military Council and Bulganin. A week later, order No. 0017 was issued: to expel the population from the combat zone. In the autumn, when the enemy was on the outskirts of Moscow, the same Council of the Western Front (it was already commanded by Zhukov) reminded:

“Strictly comply with order No. 017 of August 12, 1941 on the eviction of the civilian population from the one-kilometer zone of hostilities.

All citizens who resist the eviction should be arrested and handed over to the NKVD.”

When the Germans, after a lull, tried, with the advent of cold weather, to resume the offensive near Moscow, Stalin's voice was heard:

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“ORDER OF THE STAFF OF THE Supreme High Command No. 0428 ON MEASURES TO DEPRIVE the ENEMY OF THE POSSIBILITY TO USE SETTLEMENTS FOR DEFENSE

November 17, 1941

The experience of the last month of the war has shown that the German army is poorly adapted to war in winter conditions, does not have warm clothes and, experiencing enormous difficulties from the onset of frost, huddles in the front line in populated areas. The enemy, arrogant to the point of insolence, was going to spend the winter in the warm houses of Moscow and Leningrad, but this

hindered the actions of our troops. On vast sections of the front, the German troops, having met stubborn resistance from our units, were forced to go on the defensive and deployed in populated areas along the roads for 20-30 km on both sides. German soldiers, as a rule, live in cities, towns, villages in peasant huts, sheds, rigs, baths near the front, while the headquarters of the German units are located in larger settlements and cities, hiding in basements, using them as cover from our aircraft and artillery. The Soviet population of these points is usually evicted and thrown out by the German invaders.

To deprive the German army of the possibility of stationing itself in villages and cities, to drive the German invaders out of all settlements into the cold in the fields, to smoke them out of all rooms and warm shelters and to make them freeze in the open air—such is an urgent task, from the solution of which in many respects depends on the acceleration of the defeat of the enemy and the disintegration of his army.

The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command orders:

1. Destroy and burn to the ground all settlements in the rear of the German troops at a distance of 40-60 km in depth from the front line and 20-30 km to the right and left of the roads.

To destroy settlements within the indicated radius of action, immediately drop aircraft, make extensive use of artillery and mortar fire, teams of scouts, skiers and guerrilla sabotage groups equipped with Molotov cocktails, grenades and explosive devices.

2. In each regiment, create teams of hunters of 20-30 people each to blow up and burn settlements, in

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where enemy troops are stationed. To select the most courageous and politically morally strong fighters, commanders and political workers in the hunting teams, carefully explaining to them the tasks and significance of this event for the defeat of the German army. Outstanding daredevils for courageous actions in the destruction of settlements in which German troops are stationed should be presented with a government award.

3. In the event of a forced withdrawal of our units in one sector or another, take the Soviet population with them and obligatorily destroy all settlements without exception so that the enemy cannot use them. Primarily for this purpose use the hunter teams allocated in the regiments.

4. The military councils of the fronts and individual armies systematically check how the tasks for the destruction of settlements in the radius indicated above from the front line are being carried out. Headquarters every 3 days to report in a separate summary how many and which settlements have been destroyed over the past days and by what means these results have been achieved.

Headquarters of the Supreme High Command

I. STALIN B. SHAPOSHNIKOV"

TsAMO. F. 148a. Op. 3763. D. 111. L. 21, 22. Certified copy.

The troops were now instructed to "destroy and burn to the ground all settlements" in the front line. Order No. 0428 opened the eyes of commanders and political workers. If earlier they, as the military commissar of the 53rd cavalry division Gomazkov reported, showed "unnecessary and harmful liberalism in this matter", then "now this is not the case in parts of our division. Only on November 19 and 20 we burned down four settlements". A dry but impressive report was sent by Lieutenant Colonel Perevertkin, Deputy Chief of the Operations Department of the th Army. This military professional reported on the execution of the order of the Headquarters as of November 25, i.e. in just one week. The data is placed in a neat table where the columns are numbered: | - numbers in order, there are 53 of them, 2 - names of settlements, 3 - "by what means to destroy

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wives and degree of destruction. Here are the final statistics on the report of the pedantic lieutenant colonel (with the preservation of his spelling):

Destroyed by artillery - 2 settlements.

Burned completely by troops - 17.

Partially burned - 30.

Partially burnt and destroyed - 1.

There are 5-6 houses left - 1.

Only stone buildings remained - 1.

There are 7-8 houses left - {.

The list consists of unpretentious Russian names, at the beginning:

1. GOROBOVO - Destroyed by artillery.

2. ZOVRAZHIE - Destroyed by artillery.

3. SHARAPOVKA - Burnt completely by the troops: the last

53. KOLYUBAKOVO - Partially burned.

Zhukov and Bulganin issued Order No. 01126 on November 27, which reads, among other things:

"Simultaneously with the adaptation of the settlement to the defense, draw up a plan and carry out preparatory measures for destruction by destroying or burning all vital centers, buildings and stocks of food and materials in the event of a forced abandonment of the settlement."

Nobody, of course, wanted to be left behind. Here is another report on the successful destruction of native settlements. On December 3, the head of the chemical troops of the 6th Army, Colonel Bregadze, reported: "The village of Akulovo was burned with bottles, ... 27 houses were burned with bottles."

Two weeks had not passed since Stalin's order, and reports were pouring into Headquarters that teams of "torch-bearers" with a total number of 9,500 people had been sent behind enemy lines. Among these saboteurs was the famous Zoya Kosmo Demyanskaya. In the village of Petrishchevo, she set fire to peasant houses, bypassing those in which the invaders were stationed. On November 28, one of the victims of the fire seized her and handed her over to the Germans; she was executed the next day. The gallows with the body of the arsonist stood in Petrishchevo for more than a month. Liberate the village in January

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whether. Major Arthur Sprogis, authorized by the GKO on the Western Front for sabotage work, sent to Moscow an idea of rewarding the heroine, attributing to her the correct dying words taken from official paper: "Death to the fascist invaders! Long live the socialist motherland! Long live Comrade Stalin!" On January 27, 1942, materials appeared in Pravda and Komsomolskaya Pravda. On February 16, 1942, Zoya was posthumously awarded the title of hero. The legend has entered pro-propaganda usage.

The counteroffensive of the Soviet troops near Moscow did not weaken the destructive impulse. In the report of the head of the Mozhaish sector of the NKVD, senior major of state security Leontiev, dated December 30, we read:

"The sabotage groups of the NKVD, transferred over the front line, set fire to: Rogatino, Zabolotye, Usatkovo, Arkhangelskoye, Volchenki, Kovrigino, Gorbovo. Agent groups of the sector set fire to: Krivosheino, Novaya Derevnya, Khaustovo, Ogarkovo and Pavlovka".

The toponymy of Nekrasov involuntarily comes to mind: Gorelovo, Neyolovo, Crop failure, too... And the song: "The enemies burned down their native hut..." And another song: "Comrade Stalin lives for our joy..."

From the statistical collection "The National Economy of the USSR in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945" (M., 1990) we learn:

"The Nazi invaders completely or partially destroyed and burned 1710 cities and towns and more than 70 thousand villages and villages; burned and destroyed over 6 million buildings and displaced about 25 million people."

I would like to know what about the settlements destroyed by order of the leader and his henchmen, did they enter into this nightmarish result?

Stalin: Inspired Lies from the Podium

On November 6, Stalin delivered the traditional pre-holiday report. True, the meeting took place underground, at the Mayakovskaya metro station. In content, or rather, in hypocrisy and distortion of facts, Stalin in this speech surpassed himself. These matters are outside our topic, so I will give only brief excerpts:

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"Where are the reasons for the temporary military failures of the Red Army? One of the reasons for the failure of the Red Army is the absence of a second front in Europe against the Nazi troops.

Another reason for the temporary failures of our army is the lack of tanks and, to some extent, aviation.

He found no other reason. He could not, in fact, talk about his own blindness and suicidal unwillingness to face facts, about the destruction of military personnel and other advantages of socialism. Even in the days of heavy defeats, he could not resist the temptation of boasting. Here is a phrase worthy of Dr. Goebbels:

"... our glorious tankers and artillerymen more than once put the vaunted German troops to flight with their numerous tanks. (Applause)".

This is Stalin speaking, who quite recently was ready to flee from Moscow! Then he spoke about Soviet losses:

"During 4 months of the war, we lost 350,000 killed and 378,000 missing, and we have [million 20,000 people wounded. During the same period, the enemy lost more than 4.5 million people killed, wounded and captured."

At this point, the Soviet leader definitely overshadowed the Nazi Minister of Propaganda. By this time, the Red Army had lost from 6.5 to 7 million servicemen killed, wounded and missing (in fact, prisoners) (Pavlenko, p. 282). The corresponding figure for the Wehrmacht is 743 thousand people (GTalder, vol. U, book 2, p. 98). Stalin, like Nozdryov, could not bring himself to tell the truth. Remember how Gogol's hero wanted to tell how someone was given 20 leeches. The tongue, however, pronounced itself 120.

Stalin confidently predicted the imminent end of the hated Nazis, his recent partners and friends:

"Only the Hitlerite fools cannot understand that not only the European rear, but also the German rear of the German troops is a volcano ready to explode and bury the Hitlerite adventurers.

Only Hitler's narcissistic fools fail to see that the "new order" in Europe and the notorious "foundation" of this order is a volcano ready to explode at any

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moment and bury the German imperialist HOUSE OF CARDS.

The German invaders are straining their last strength. There is no doubt that [Germany cannot withstand such tension for long. A few more months, another half a year, maybe a year, and Hitlerite Germany must burst under the weight of her crimes.

So, the [Hitler's] regime is ready to explode, he doesn't have long to live. Remember how Molotov cut off Ribbentrop? He was raving about the end of the British Empire, and the Soviet guest asked sarcastically: "If this is so, why are we sitting in the basement?" Practically the same question could have been addressed to Stalin, but Vyacheslav Mikhailovich remained silent. Most likely he was embarrassed.

The idea that the Wehrmacht was exhausted firmly stuck in Stalin's head. He will repeat it until May [1942] and, guided by this illusion, will send Soviet troops to a senseless death.

November offensive of the Germans

The balance of forces in early November was as follows: Army Group Center - 58 divisions (13 tank, 7 motorized, 38 infantry); Red Army near Moscow - 74 divisions (60 rifle, 14 cavalry) and [7 tank brigades.

The situation gradually changed in favor of the Red Army. Many Luftwaffe forces were withdrawn from the Eastern Front. Soviet reinforcements were constantly arriving. At the end of October, Zhukov's Western Front received - from reserves and other fronts - 11 rifle divisions, 16 tank brigades and 40 artillery regiments; \m... 49). At the end of October, Stalin had three new reserve armies, for the whole of November - six more, they were placed to the east of the capital. We read from Vasilevsky (p. 146):

"At the turn of Vytegra - Rybinsk - Torky - Saratov Stalingrad Astrakhan a new strategic echelon was being created for the Red Army. Here, on the basis of the decision of the GKO, adopted on October 5, ten reserve armies were formed.

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The process of formation of new parts and formations proceeded quickly and not always according to the rules. Here is one example. On October 21, Golikov was sent to Kuznetsk (Volga Military District) with an order to form the 10th Army - 9 rifle and cavalry divisions. He received 100 thousand people: by [1 thousand in a rifle division, 3 thousand each in a cavalry division. Age structure: Only 25% of recruits are under 30. The army commander, concerned that there were less than [0,000] communists and Komsomol members, requested the dispatch of 700 party members. There were other difficulties: two cavalry divisions had no saddles, one rifle division lacked 7,500 rifles. Golikov expected that he had three months to form and train an army, but already on November 24 he was thrown near Moscow (Golikov, pp. [1-28].

Of course, not all troops were of this quality. K | December 70 divisions from the Far East and 27 from Central Asia and Transcaucasia were redeployed to the European part of the country.

The German command greatly underestimated the possibilities of replenishing the Red Army. [On October 3, at a meeting in Orsha, in the presence of Halder, it was stated that Stalin had 160 divisions and 40 brigades, in fact there were 279 and 99, respectively. [Hitler, OKW and even OKN were still in the sky. At the same meeting, Halder announced the strategic goals of the Center group for 1941: at least - to advance 250 km east of Moscow, maximum - all 300. In response to this, Lieutenant Colonel von Liebenstein, Guderian's chief of staff, said: "We not in France, and it's not the month of May."

The realization of the Soviet advantage took time. For the time being, the situation near Moscow remained critical for Stalin, alarming to the extreme. On November 7, von Bock decided to resume hostilities, as cold, clear weather had set in and the ground had frozen.

On November 15, the 3rd Panzer Group and part of Strauss' 9th Army hit Khomenko's 30th Army in the direction of Klin. Khomenko, who had only 20 tanks and 2 infantry divisions, retreated without a fight and was immediately dismissed: Stalin sent Lelyushenko in his place.

On November 16, Göpner's 4th tank group attacked Rokossovsky's troops, with the goal of reaching Istra. Twelve divisions of the group had only 75% of the standard ammunition load and

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fuel for 300 km (under normal conditions). The first day brought the Germans a serious success. They surprised the Soviet units and took many prisoners. Rokossovsky wanted to move across the Istra River, but Zhukov did not allow him. On the second day, the resistance of the Soviet troops greatly slowed down the advance of the enemy.

On the 18th Guderian's 2nd Panzer Army began its offensive in the Tula region. On the same day, von Bock discussed with Halder the prospects for the operation. According to the commander of the "Center" group, "both sides are at the limit of their strength, and victory will go to the one who has the strongest will." Two days later Bock set up his advanced command post on the train behind the two panzer groups. The 4th Panzer Group was ordered to pass Klin from the south, and the 3rd to take the city. It happened on the 23rd. Another change of plans followed. Bock accepted Reinhardt's offer (he had just succeeded Hoth, who accepted the [7th

army), which, covering Hoepner's flank, was now to turn towards Moscow. The Soviet troops continued their retreat. When they left, they no longer burned settlements. German scouts were at a loss: either the enemy was completely demoralized, or he expected to return soon. A Soviet deserter, an NKVD lieutenant, who fell into the hands of the Germans, reported that Soviet troops were evacuating the area west of the Moscow-Volga Canal and preparing a counterattack against Klin. The protocol of interrogation did not reach the headquarters of the tank group until mid-December.

It is worth noting that not everyone in the German leadership at that time suffered from thoughtless optimism. Halder's diary contains the following entry (November 24, 1941):

"[Colonel General Fromm. Outlined the general military-economic situation. Falling Curve! He thinks a truce is needed!]"

The exclamation mark is Halder's only comment. The commander of the Reserve Army, General Fromm, was responsible for conscription into the armed forces; all troops on German territory were subordinate to him.

On November 27, the 3rd Panzer Group reached the Moscow-Volga canal, the next day the Germans captured a bridgehead on the eastern bank of the canal near Yakhroma. On the same day, the 4th group

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physically stopped west of Krasnaya Polyana. On its way there were minefields and earthen fortifications. Moscow was less than 20 km away. The right flank of the group was supposed to be covered by von Kluge's 4th Army, but it was clearly lagging behind. Even further south, the Soviet 50th Army prevented Guderian from advancing.

On the evening of the 27th, von Bock again changed his plans. He gave Reinhardt one battalion of reinforcements (he had nothing else left for his soul) and ordered him to turn south to help Hoepner. Was this all-in play justified? Hardly. By the end of November, Typhoon was no longer a single operation, it fell apart into disparate attempts to advance, devoid of strategic coherence. And yet Bock, despite all his doubts, could not stop. There was a combination of reasons at work here. Do not forget that the offensive is in the blood of every German officer. As Robert Citino writes (p. 45):

"Since the inception of the Prussian army, its officer corps has been nothing more than a pack of attack dogs, who have sought to break any leash that restricts their freedom of action, and often rushed at each other when the prey was near."

There were also personal reasons. In Poland and France, Bock played second fiddle to Rundstedt. In September, his best tank group was sent to the same Rundstedt, depriving him of his rightful prize - Moscow. Now wounded vanity and a thirst for glory did not allow Bock to give up the offensive, which had long been exhausted.

Let us now turn to what happened on the Soviet side. Lelyushenko stopped the flight of the 30th Army, but it was driven into a corner between the Volga and the canal and could not interfere with the movement of the Germans. After breaking through the front between Klin and Solnechnogorsk, the 16th Army of Rokossovsky took over the German attack towards Moscow.

Unlike Bock, Stalin did not need to throw his last reserves into battle, he had enough of them. At the end of November, he gave Zhukov's Western Front 9 rifle and 2 cavalry divisions, 8 rifle and 6 tank brigades, and 10 separate tank battalions. In the last week of November, the Stavka also brought five fresh reserve armies to the west. Three of them - 34, 36 and 80th - are located to the east

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from Moscow, one - 6th - stood behind the right flank of Timoshenko's Southwestern Front, and Golikov's 9th army took up positions on the Oka below Kashira, blocking Guderian's path to Kashira and Ryazan.

After the loss of Klin, the Stavka formed two armies from its reserves. Kuznetsov's shock army on November 23 took up positions along the Moscow-Volga canal south of Dmitrov. The 20th Army of Vlasov on the 27th received a sector between the right flank [of the 6th Army and the channel. Due to the subsequent transition of Vlasov to the side of the Germans, his role in the defense of Moscow was hushed up for a long time. Military historians tried not to mention the 20th Army, sometimes it figured as the army of Lizyukov (Vlasov's deputy).

Even earlier, on November 26, the German 40th Panzer Corps captured the city of Istra (before [930 Voskresensk, nearby is the famous New Jerusalem Monastery). Istra is located 45 km from the capital. Repeated Soviet attacks in an attempt to recapture the city were unsuccessful.

On the 29th, German tank groups near Yakhroma and west of Krasnaya Polyana came into contact with the fresh troops of Kuznetsov and Vlasov. The German advance was now insignificant. Bock, in a telephone conversation with Halder, expressed his misgivings (Halder, vol. 3, November 29):

"...if the offensive against Moscow now launched is not successful in the north, Moscow will become a new Verdun, that is, the battle will turn into a fierce frontal massacre."

Further, Halder cites von Bock's consideration:

"To throw the 4th Army (20th Army Corps) into battle is too early. This will become expedient only when our troops advancing from the north reach Zvenigorod."

Why the commander of the "Center" group delayed the approach of the infantry when his tankers asked for it remains unclear. Throughout the second half of November, von Kluge's 4th Army actually stood still - on the Nara River to the west of Moscow. He had

[3 divisions, of which only one armored and one motorized. Due to losses from Soviet counterattacks, in late October, von Bock allowed Kluge to stand still until the advancing panzer groups in the north and south had diverted Soviet forces from his sector. For this reason, the 3rd Infantry Division

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Zia from the army of Kluge went on the attack near Narofominsk only on November 30 and soon stopped. A fresh, well-equipped Siberian division was too tough for the Germans. The 30-degree frost also did not contribute to success.

On the 29th, Stalin subordinated three new armies to Zhukov - the 1st shock, [0th and 20th. At Headquarters, they were now thinking about a massive counterattack. At this time, von Bock was tormented by doubts and gloomy forebodings. He had no fresh troops, ammunition and fuel were running out. He knew that the OKH continued to regard the impending encirclement of Moscow as merely a stage on the way to Voronezh and Yaroslavl. Late on the night of November 30, Bock telephoned Brauchitsch that Army Group Center did not have enough forces to encircle the Soviet capital, let alone further. During the conversation, Bock asked the commander-in-chief several times if he could hear him. The next morning, he repeated the same thing over the teletype, adding that talk of the imminent collapse of the Russians was "fantasy." The troops are exhausted, the offensive has lost "all meaning and purpose." Bock's conclusion was unhappy: he would soon have to stop at the gates of Moscow, then he would make the final decision ((letKe, Mozsoh, p. 61). Bock still hoped that he would have a choice.

On November 29 or 30, there was a misunderstanding worthy of an opera buff, if the situation were not so tense. Stalin called Zhukov asking if the Germans had taken Dedovsk (a town 32 km from the capital on the way from Istra). Zhukov, knowing that fierce battles were going on in this area, replied that he did not have such information. Stalin, having poured out his irritation on him, ordered personally to organize a counterattack in order to return this important point. He rejected the objections of the Comfront. Zhukov called Rokossovsky and learned that a village with a similar name, Dedovo, had been lost. He passed this information on to Stalin, considering the incident to be over, but that was not the case (vol. 2, p. 32):

"I decided to call the Supreme Commander and explain that there had been a mistake. But here, as they say, I found a scythe on a stone. I.V. Stalin was completely angry. He demanded to immediately go to K.K. Rokossovsky and make sure that this most ill-fated settlement is certainly recaptured from the enemy. Moreover, he ordered to take with him the commander of the 5th Army, L.A. Govorova:

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"He is an artilleryman, let him help Rokossovsky organize artillery fire in the interests of the 16th Army."

Three important generals, leaving their headquarters, went to the scene of the incident in the division of Beloborodov. It turned out that we are talking about several houses on the other side of the ravine. I had to send a company with two tanks and drive out the Germans. This episode is a good illustration of Stalin's commanding style.

On December 2 and 3, von Kluge put two of his corps into action and achieved some success, the 258th division took Naro-Fominsk, 40 km from the capital. One reconnaissance battalion broke through the Soviet defenses and advanced into the southwestern outskirts of Moscow, but was soon stopped by tanks and workers' militia. German infantry losses were heavy, over 600 men, and Kluge ordered a retreat. In any case, his attack was belated. By this time, Göpner's tank group could no longer advance. In Halder's diary there is an entry dated 4 December:

"The offensive of the 3rd and 4th tank groups will resume on 6.12. There is no reason to stop offensive operations on the front of Guderian's tank army.

The Chief of the General Staff, like his Fuhrer, still could not grasp the realities of the Eastern Front. The German offensive on Moscow came to an end, kaput, the troops ran out of steam. Fedor von Bock threw his last reserves into action and miscalculated. It's time for payback.

Intermission

Could the German troops, under other circumstances, have taken Moscow in 1941? Talking about history in the subjunctive mood is a thankless task, but it is still worth a try.

In early August, the Germans completed the liquidation of the Smolensk pocket. Moscow was 300-350 km away. Halder, von Bock, Guderian and other generals dreamed of immediately moving on Moscow, but Hitler preferred Kyiv and Leningrad. The attack on the Soviet capital was postponed for 6-7 weeks. The summer option had obvious advantages for the Germans: dry weather and better condition of the troops. In addition, Stalin had less

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six reserves. Therefore, in August and September, the chances of capturing Moscow were much greater.

It should be noted that this would not mean winning the war. For all Stalin's strategic inexperience, it was enough for him not to give up. Time, demographics and space were on his side. Twice he was close to capitulation. On June 22, he still thought that Hitler could be pacified by concessions, hence the strange clause in Directive 02 not to cross into enemy territory. On October 7, he spoke about the new peace of Brest-Litovsk. The rest of the time, he was ready to continue the war, as long as he had manpower, vast Russian expanses and other resources. The leader was probably familiar with the answer of Alexander 1 to the ambassador of Napoleon (N.K. Schilder "Emperor Alexander the First, his life and reign". SPb. 1897, v. 3, p. 79; cited in: Fatal decisions, p. 111-112):

"I am not blinded by dreams; I know to what extent the Emperor Napoleon is a great commander, but as you can see, space and time are on my side. In all this hostile land for you there is no such remote corner where I would not retreat, there is no such

a point which I would not defend before agreeing to make a shameful peace. I will not start a war, but I will not lay down my arms as long as at least one enemy soldier remains in Russia.”

Such a strategy ultimately meant a death sentence [for Hitler. In a war of attrition (starvation, as Svechin said), Germany had virtually no chance of winning. From the very beginning, the German General Staff was afraid of a suitable development of the situation. However, the political and moral atmosphere in the country allowed the dictator Fuhrer to lead the grateful German people into any abyss. The fate of the Soviet population was not better.

But let's not get carried away with rhetoric. Let us note, at the very least, that the failure of the attack on Moscow reduced the hopes of a German victory to a miserable minimum.

It's time to talk about losses. For almost half a century, data on Soviet losses was not available - either they were not made public so as not to frighten us, or they were not processed, perhaps both. Finally, a statistical study of a group of authors led by Colonel General

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G.F. Krivosheev. This book is far from perfect, not very well organized, but it is a giant leap in our knowledge of the subject. According to some, it contains inaccuracies, even underestimations. It is quite possible, but too often the blood runs cold even from reduced figures. In the following, if Soviet losses are given without reference, this means that they are taken from the work of Krivosheev.

A few words about the definitions used by the authors of this work. The total losses consisted of two categories: sanitary, i.e. those who ended up in hospitals after the battle, and those who are irrevocable. The last category covered those killed on the battlefield and those who died there from wounds, plus the missing, which included those about whom it was not known what happened to them - prisoners and deserters during the battle (although they were not officially noted). Theoretically, irretrievable losses are not equal to the number of dead, because prisoners and deserters could survive. If you subtract the survivors from the irretrievable losses, you get a demographic loss. However, Krivosheev provides such data only for the armed forces as a whole.

Zhukov, who played the main role in the Moscow direction, prefers to talk about the losses of the enemy, and, turning to his own, gets off with ambiguous formulations (vol. 2, p. 36):

“The heavy losses of the Nazi troops, the protracted nature of the Typhoon operation, the fierce resistance of the Soviet soldiers - all this sharply affected the combat effectiveness of the Nazi troops, gave rise to confusion and disbelief in success in their ranks.

During the battle of Moscow, the Soviet troops also suffered heavy losses, but they retained their fighting efficiency and unshakable faith in victory until the end of the defensive battles.

Same?! In the defense of Moscow, according to Krivosheev, for the period from September 30 to December 5 | million 250 thousand Soviet troops in the form of 96 divisions, 14 brigades and 2 fortified areas. The total losses amounted to 638 thousand 279 people, or 52.7% of the personnel; irrevocable — 514 thousand 338 people, or 41.1%. What about the Germans? The Moscow Encyclopedia of 1997 estimates their total losses at 145 thousand people.

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Trouble in the camp of Hitler

So, Operation Typhoon, with the ambitious goal of reaching the Middle Volga, ended in a complete fiasco. The Wehrmacht was not even able to capture the Soviet capital, which was its intermediate stage. In this case, it can be said with almost one hundred percent certainty that the loss of Moscow would not have led to the end of the war. By this time, the Red Army had recovered from the catastrophic summer defeats, and a significant part of the defense industry had been evacuated to the east. Stalin soon even had the illusion that it was possible to quickly liberate Soviet territory from the invaders, but we will talk about this later.

The failure of the offensive near Moscow was not the only failure of the Germans. Strategic overvoltage made itself felt in other places. On November 21, Kleist's tank group captured Rostov, but not for long. Due to the furious attacks of the Soviet troops, the city had to be abandoned after a week. The commander of the Army Group "South" Rundstedt asked for permission to withdraw troops to winter quarters beyond the river. Mius. Hitler refused and after some time arrived at the Poltava headquarters of the South group, accompanied by Brauchitsch and Halder.

The visit began with a melodramatic scene (cf. Conti², pp. 402-403). Rundstedt, refusing to take the blame for the loss of Rostov, declared that the responsibility lay with those who had planned the campaign so badly. There was a moment when it seemed that Hitler would throw himself at the field marshal, but he only ripped off the Knight's Cross from his uniform. Brauchitsch soon suffered a heart attack. Rundstedt had had a mild heart attack a few days earlier, but he refused to go to the hospital.

Hitler continued to rage, he removed General Shtulpnagel from command of the 17th Army. Rundstedt still insisted that he needed more leeway. Having been refused, he asked to be relieved of his duties as commander. Hitler used this occasion to present in his own style. I'm not going to consider resignation requests, he said, my superior is God, I can't go to him and say I've had enough. All these were those atral gestures. The Fuhrer soon dismissed Rundstedt, replacing him with Reichenau. He at first tried to return Rostov, but,

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convinced of the unreality of this undertaking, he ordered to retreat behind the Mius. Hitler had to accept.

Cases near Leningrad also did not please the Fuhrer. On October 16, the Germans went on the offensive and by November 8 they occupied Tikhvin, having gone halfway to joining the Finns. Things didn't go any further. On the flanks, near Volkhov and east of Malaya Vishera, they got stuck. This is how the Tikhvin ledge arose. The headquarters, despite the difficult situation near Moscow, did not want to allow the Germans to meet with the Finns on the river. Svir, which meant a complete blockade of Leningrad. The reinforcements that arrived near Tikhvin gave the Soviet troops numerical superiority over the Germans; this, however, did not apply to tanks. On November 12, the 52nd Army launched a counteroffensive near Malaya Vishera, threatening to narrow the base of the Tikhvin salient. Leeb had to go on the defensive. Stubborn fighting lasted three weeks. In early December, Soviet troops broke through south of Tikhvin. Because of the threat of encirclement, the German command had to start a general withdrawal. By the end of the month, they retreated to their original October lines. After that, the Finns took a wait-and-see attitude.

| On December 11, von Bock, commander of the Center group, reported to Hitler that further pressure on Moscow was unlikely to yield tangible results: the troops were at the limit of their strength. The General Staff, it is worth noting, still harbored bright hopes, but even the OKW now had serious doubts. Keitel suggested to Hitler that the troops should be withdrawn to winter quarters; Keitel flew out of the office and sat down to write a letter of resignation, putting a pistol next to him - he was about to commit suicide. Jodl arrived in time and removed it. pistol and persuaded Keitel to remain in office, he had no ha
rakter refuse.

Rundstedt remained firmly convinced that the deep advance of his army group was a fundamental miscalculation in strategy. Unlike many, he did not attribute the failure of the 1941 campaign to a lack of resources. In his opinion, there was a design error. After the war, he formulated it this way (T1a4e! Nats, TBe Segtap Sepegal5... p. 184):

"In my opinion, the operations of 1941 should have been directed at first not to Moscow, but to Leningrad. This would make it possible to connect with the Finns. Then, following

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At the next stage, it was necessary to attack Moscow from the north in cooperation with the advance of Army Group Center from the east.

Rundstedt remained out of work for several months, then Hitler realized that he was losing one of the best German generals and sent him to the Western Front. Rundstedt never returned to Russia.

The situation with Army Group Center was no better. On December 5, von Bock, with the consent of the OKH, canceled the offensive. On the same day, Brauchitsch decided to step down from his post. On the 6th, Hitler called a meeting to discuss a course of action. He felt that his situation was bad, almost hopeless. The two largest operations of the Wehrmacht, "Barbarossa" and "Typhoon", did not achieve their goals. But the Fuhrer convinced himself that [Germany was still capable of winning. In confirmation, he cited distorted figures of losses on the Eastern Front: [germany - 500 thousand (actually 800 thousand), the USSR - 10 million (actually 6.5-7 million). Then he announced his decision regarding the replenishment of the troops of the Eastern Front, forbidding the movement of units from Scandinavia and Western Europe. In return, he ordered to send to the front line truck drivers who were destroyed or awaiting repair, and home front servicemen, as well as to additionally mobilize industrial workers, replacing them with prisoners of war. He ordered Stalin's tactics to be adopted to fight for every piece of land: "If the Russians could hold out near Moscow, we won't budge either."

Halder noted in his diary the next day that the Führer was increasingly addressing the commanders at the front directly over Brauchitsch's head. The latter, at best, served as a postman delivering Hitler's orders. True, on December 8, Hitler, by Directive No. 39, canceled the offensive, citing unusually early winter cold. He agreed to a retreat from Tikhvin, but not for 30 km, as von Leeb wanted, but for a short distance so that the approaches remained within artillery range.

On December 18, von Bock, who had long suffered from a stomach ailment, showed up ill and was replaced by von Kluge. The next day, Hitler dismissed von Brauchitsch and appointed himself commander in chief of the ground forces.

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Counter attack

On the Soviet side, they had been thinking about a counter-offensive for a long time, since June, but repeated attempts to attack, as a rule, did not give results. On November 30, Zhukov, who had just received three fresh armies, presented his plan to Stalin. (vol. 2, pp. 36-37):

"The enemy is exhausted. But if we do not eliminate dangerous enemy penetrations now, the Germans will be able to reinforce their troops in the Moscow area with large reserves at the expense of the northern and southern groupings of their troops, and then the situation may become serious.

get complicated."

Stalin, usually a supporter of counterattacks (you need to attack, something will work out), now suddenly fell into indecision. He said that he would consult with the General Staff, and hesitated for several days. Zhukov's fears about German reinforcements were unfounded, but neither he nor Stalin knew this at the time. Guo this reason, the delay looks even more strange. It is quite possible that the last argument in favor of the attack was the severe frosts. Soviet sources do not explain why Stalin waited. As for the weather, they react to any mention of it as a "falsification of history". This does not prevent them from citing bad weather as the reason for the failure of the Soviet actions; we'll hear about it again.

Be that as it may, the final decision seems to have been taken on December 4 (Vasilevsky, p. 152):

"The Stavka determined the start of the counteroffensive on December 5-6. On December 3rd there was a heavy snowfall, on the night of the 4th the temperature dropped to -32 degrees Celsius."

Pavlenko 285), according to Zhukov, gives a somewhat different coverage of the origins of the operation. He believes that initially the Soviet command wanted to launch several counterattacks. Having discovered, to their surprise, the pliability of the German defense, the Soviet troops launched a counteroffensive.

It began at dawn on December 5 with the actions of Konev's Kalinin Front. The 29th and 31st armies attacked the northern part of the German salient. The next day, two other armies - the 30th and [th shock - moved from Dmitrov on the Moscow-Volga canal. On the 7th, Zhukov brought three more armies into battle

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(16th, 20th and 5th) in order to surround Reinhardt's 3rd Panzer Army (as his group was now called) and one corps of the 4th Panzer Group. The 2nd Panzer and 2nd Field Armies attacked in the south, the 4th Army in the center.

There is no need to describe the course of hostilities, it is well known. [German troops retreated along the entire front, often in disarray. The front of Army Group Center was stretched over more than 1000 km: from Ostashkov in the north to the Kursk-Voronezh railway line in the south. Von Bock did not have any reserves, and the disposition of his troops had no depth. It was a catastrophe, the first in the Eastern campaign.

Frost played a significant role in this situation. The German troops never received winter uniforms and were dressed in whatever. Tank, aircraft and automobile engines would not start, and the recoil mechanisms of cannons, machine guns and automatic weapons did not work due to the thickening of the lubricant. Retreating, the Germans abandoned equipment. Wehrmacht soldiers got a complete picture of the delights of the Russian winter. In one building, there were 1350 cases of frostbite, 350 of them required amputation.

At the same time, far from the Eastern Front, an event occurred that in the long term greatly influenced the outcome of the Second World War, although at first it looked simply like a new link in the military madness that swept the planet. On December 7, the Japanese launched a war with America. Hitler had no prior information about the attack on Pearl Harbor. He only knew that Japan was not inclined to fight the Soviet Union. Paradoxically, Moscow, thanks to Sorge's reports, was better informed than Berlin about Japanese plans. Hitler was in Berlin these days. In principle, he would have preferred to keep America out of a military conflict, but faced with a fact, he made a decision with a strong tinge of attempted suicide. On December 11, in a speech before the Reichstag, the Führer declared that Germany was at war with America. Hitler's motives are not easy to explain. It is very possible that he wanted to divert attention from the growing collapse on the Eastern Front. It is also possible that he heeded the advice of his admirals, who insisted that in this case they would have a free hand to sink American transports,

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supplying England. It is also possible that he became a prisoner of his rhetoric. On April 4, 1941, in a conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Matsuoka, he spoke as follows (see 1939-1941 ... p. 303):

"... if Japan enters into a military conflict with the United States, Germany, for its part, will immediately take the necessary steps." "... [Germany, in the event of a conflict between America and Japan, will immediately come to the aid of the latter, since the strength of the members of the Triple Alliance lies in their joint actions."

The Führer's strange logic with regard to America is also characterized by the order given to all ships and submarines in the Atlantic Ocean on June 21, a few hours before the attack on the USSR (G.Kas\$, pp. 92-93):

"Under all circumstances not to attack American ships, not to return fire even when the Americans attack."

This order was canceled only on 8 December. The Germans soon experienced the consequences of Hitler's blunder in their own skin. Even before America took part in the hostilities in North Africa or Europe, the material supply of the Red Army had improved dramatically. In total, she received 400,000 trucks, 51,000 Jeeps, 17,000 aircraft, [2,000 tanks and armored vehicles, 8,000 anti-aircraft guns, 105 submarines, 197 torpedo boats, and much more, including 4,700 thousand tons of food. We will talk about this again.

Let's return to the Soviet counteroffensive. The operation, which began as an attempt to avert the threat from Moscow, exceeded all the expectations of Stalin and the Headquarters. By December 13, they decided that von Bock's group was powerless to prevent a deep detour from the south. For this purpose, Cherevichenko's Bryansk Front was formed on the Soviet left flank. Stalin's imagination was inflamed more and more. He now wanted to destroy Army Group Center with attacks from the north (Kalinin Front) and from the south (Western and Bryansk). The scale of the operation expanded - 900 km along the front, 300 km in depth. Three fronts had at their disposal 16 armies - 78 rifle and 22 cavalry divisions, [9 rifle and 17 tank brigades, 720 tanks and 1170 aircraft.

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In a strange way, although in Moscow they could not know this, Hitler, by his order to "stand and fight," created the conditions for the implementation of the Stalinist plan.

The Soviet counteroffensive continued for a whole month - until January 7, 1942. Up to a dozen operations were carried out, the most significant of them: Kalinin, Klinsko-Solnechnogorsk, Tula, Kaluga and Yelets (Pavlenko, p. 286).

The Wehrmacht suffered its first defeat in the war. The Germans were thrown back 100-200 km from Moscow, their total losses reached 168 thousand people. Kalinin and Kaluga returned to Soviet hands, and in total more than 1 | thousand settlements (however, the Red Army destroyed a considerable number of them during its retreat).

There was a high price to pay for this success. Two fronts, Western and Kalinin, had 105 divisions and 44 brigades, | million 22 thousand people. The total losses were twice as high as the German ones - 370,955 people, or 36.3% of the personnel.

Stalin failed to defeat Army Group Center mainly because he was unable to concentrate large reserves in this strategic direction. The monstrous losses in defensive battles, as well as the dispersion of forces, had an effect. In the autumn, 9 reserve armies were formed, but even before this process was completed, three of them - the 3rd shock, the 0th and the 20th - were put into action on the flanks of the Western Front. They played a role in the transition from defense to offensive, but by the end of the year they were severely weakened. Tangible Soviet losses in the offensive were combined with a lack of material resources. The movement of industry to the east and the loss of territory led to a temporary decrease in the production of defense products. Here are some numbers. In the third quarter of 1941, 1,121 T-34 tanks were produced, in the fourth - 765; 2,329 aircraft were produced in September, and 627 in November (Pavlenko, p. 287). Especially acute was the shortage of ammunition. There were days when it was released on | | shell per cannon and 2-3 mines per mortar.

Stalin, meanwhile, drew too optimistic conclusions from the Soviet counteroffensive. He was set on a general offensive, which would lead to a speedy end to the war. Remember his prediction in the November 6 speech that the

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Hitler could explode at any moment? The leader's faith in his own capacity for providence grew even stronger.

Evacuation

On June 24, 1941, the Evacuation Council was established under the chairmanship of Kaganovich (Izvestia of the Central Committee of the CPSU, 1990, No. 6, p. 201). But after a few days it became clear that the chairman could not cope with his work. A critical situation developed on the railways: trains with people, industrial equipment and material values were moving east, and military trains were moving towards them. Transportation took place under enemy bombing. Traffic jams and destruction disrupted the movement schedule, the fronts did not receive replenishments in time. Stalin found the culprit: the head of the Department of Military Communications, Lieutenant-General N.I. Trubetskoy was removed from his post and shot, and the Evacuation Council was reformed.

On July 16, N.M. was appointed Chairman of the Council. Shvernik, his deputies - A.N. Kosygin and M.G. Pervukhin, and members - A.I. Mikoyan, L.M. Kaganovich, M.Z. Saburov and V.S. Abakumov (News of the Central Committee of the CPSU, 1990, No. 7, p. 213).

From June to December 1941, 2,593 enterprises were evacuated from areas threatened by occupation; in the first three months of the war - 1523, incl. [360 defense. In total, during the war, in the process of evacuation to the east, 30 thousand trains (1.5 million cars) proceeded. 2.4 million heads of cattle, 5.1 million sheep and goats, 0.2 million pigs and 0.8 million horses, a lot of agricultural machinery, grain and food were moved from the western regions.

The Germans, who expected to profit from the resources of the USSR, were shocked. Expected wealth in the form of factories and raw materials fell short of expectations. There was no traction and rolling stock on the railways in the occupied part of the country, the rails had to be changed to the European standard, and then 2,500 locomotives and 20,000 wagons were taken from Germany to support troops on the Eastern Front.

Track gauge: in the USSR - 1524 mm, in Germany, as in Europe - 1435 mm.

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STRATEGIC RESULTS OF THE YEAR

The statistics on both sides of the front chilled the blood. The Germans lost 918 thousand killed and missing; for the USSR, this figure was even worse - 4 million 400 thousand. At the same time, the prospects for victory for Germany were the most bleak. In June, the Germans were opposed by 158 divisions, in December - 300, numbering four and a half million Soviet soldiers ([Bgagu 01 Sopotges\$... p. 480). There is evidence that the losses of the USSR were even greater than indicated above, but who is it easier for?

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DICTATORS AS COMMANDERS

This digression applies to the entire text of the book. During the war, both dictators became commanders-in-chief of their armies - not titular, like Roosevelt or Churchill, but de facto. Stalin never served in the army, Hitler spent the First World War in the trenches, but as an ordinary infantryman and messenger. Thus, neither Stalin nor Hitler had the minimum qualifications to lead huge armies. They did, however, using their unlimited power.

Stalin's commander's ambitions manifested themselves only after the outbreak of hostilities. It didn't bother him that he couldn't actually read the map correctly. He distinguished only distances and settlements, but completely ignored relief details such as valleys, hills, swamps and other geographical trifles (Konev, p. 980).

Even before the war, at the beginning of 1938, Hitler added to his title of Fuhrer a second one - Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. At first, many in Germany believed that with their phenomenal victories in 1939-1940. The Wehrmacht is indebted to the strategic genius of the Fuhrer. This delusion cost the German nation dearly. In reality, these successes were due to other factors, among which in the first place are the high quality of military plans, the skillful leadership of the troops and the unpreparedness of Germany's opponents. Hitler's contribution was mainly political: he owned the choice of objects for the fall. In addition, at that time he was still able to listen to the opinions of others. So, the cardinal idea of a campaign in France, a strike through the Ardennes, was expressed by Manstein, and Geet

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Lehr accepted it - contrary to the opinion of the General Staff. The French triumph turned the Führer's head. Putting aside the last remaining doubts, he ordered to prepare for war with the USSR - a decision that showed his strategic incompetence. The Führer had no idea that Germany did not have the resources that would be required for such a war, and no one in his inner circle dared to express this with sufficient persuasiveness. The leaders of the army, Brauchitsch and Halder, behaved opportunistically. The rare objections of others, such as Rundstedt, were dismissed by Hitler.

In the first months of the war, an interesting phenomenon was discovered. Dictators, by virtue of their incompetence, unwittingly helped each other. Stalin demanded that the clearly disadvantaged Soviet troops fight for their positions. This helped, at least in part, with Hitler's plans to crush the Red Army before it could retreat into the interior. The Führer, for his part, predicted the collapse of the Bolshevik regime in the first weeks of the war, but by inhumane treatment of Soviet prisoners of war he achieved the opposite. During the entire war, the Germans captured 5,700,000 prisoners of war, of which 57% did not survive, or 3,300,000. Of this number, 600,000 were killed on the spot (Ba[ouh, p. 83). To the systematic extermination of prisoners of war and Jewish civilians was added the reprisal against partisans, real or imaginary, or simply suspicious elements. Here is an example from the report of one military commandant in Belarus: in October 1941, after the murder of two Germans, 10,940 local residents were captured, 10,431 were qualified as partisans and shot (Ba[ot, pp. 83-84). By the way, this was done by the Wehrmacht, not by the SS and not by special units.

As far as inhumanity and barbarism are concerned, both dictators achieved a lot in this respect. Hitler gave the Wehrmacht servicemen complete freedom in oppression, robbery and destruction of the Soviet civilian population. His so-called. The commissar's order demanded that persons of Jewish nationality and political workers be dealt with immediately. Hitler's propaganda proclaimed the population of the USSR a bunch of subhumans. German soldiers could on advice

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territory to give free rein to animal instincts. One young German soldier wrote home in the summer of 1941: "God forbid we lose the war - they will do to us what we are doing now." Some of his premonitions came true.

STALIN'S STRATEGY

Stalin entered the new year 1942 in a state of euphoria. The future seemed dazzlingly rosy. He has already forgotten that not long ago his capital was threatened by an enemy capture. Or maybe he believed in his own statements that Germany was at the limit of its strength.

In an editorial from | January 1942 Pravda predicted victory over Nazi [Germany] in the coming year. The newspaper announced that the Red Army had reached a turning point in the war. The inexhaustible Soviet reserves, combined with Western aid, guaranteed a quick end to the war. By this time, Stalin had developed his doctrine of constantly acting factors:

"Now the fate of the war will be decided not by such an incidental moment as the moment of surprise, but by constantly acting factors: the strength of the rear, the morale of the army, the number and quality of divisions, the armament of the army, the organizational skills of the commanding staff of the army."

On January 1942, he called a meeting of the GKO. Party and state bosses Malenkov, Beria, Voroshilov, Voznesensky were present, and from the military - Shaposhnikov, Zhukov, Timoshenko, Novikov. On the agenda was the question of the future plans of the Red Army. By this time, the December counter-offensive was actually over or, if you like, fizzled out, but Stalin was burning with the desire to drive the enemy out of the country before the end of the year.

After Shaposhnikov outlined the situation on the fronts, Stalin declared (see Zhukov, vol. 2, pp. 42-43):

"The Germans are at a loss from the defeat near Moscow, they are poorly prepared for the winter. Now is the best time to go on the general offensive. The enemy expects to delay our offensive until spring, so that in the spring, having gathered forces,

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get back into action. He wants to buy time and get a break. <...> Our task is not to give the Germans this respite, to drive them west without stopping, to force them to use up their reserves before spring... When we have new reserves, the Germans will not will..."

The Supreme Commander announced the general goal of the offensive he had planned: "the defeat of the enemy on all fronts." At the same time (see Zhukov, vol. 2, p. 43), the transition to a general offensive was supposed to be carried out in an extremely short time.

Zhukov, according to his memoirs, spoke in favor of sending limited resources and reserves, primarily tanks, to his western direction, since Army Group Center had not yet had time to recover from recent attacks. As for other sectors, the Germans created a strong defense near Leningrad and in the South-West direction of Timoshenko and it makes no sense to attack there. Gosplan Chairman Voznesensky spoke in the sense that there were no material resources for a general offensive in the country. Beria and Malenkov supported the leader, insisting that the Bolsheviks were capable of overcoming any difficulties. Stalin stood his ground:

"I spoke with Tymoshenko. He is in favor of acting in the South-Western direction. It is necessary to grind the Germans faster so that they cannot attack in the spring. Who else would like to speak?

There were no applicants. Stalin decided to attack on all fronts: from Leningrad to the Crimea.

The tasks were ambitious. The Leningrad and Volkhov fronts, in cooperation with the right wing of the Northwestern Front, were supposed to lift the blockade of Leningrad. What came out of this will be described in a separate chapter.

Tymoshenko's southwestern direction was tasked with liberating the Donbass and defeating the Yug group. There have been some small successes. In particular, Soviet troops penetrated the enemy's defenses, forming the Barvenkovsky salient. Stalin wanted to develop this success. Thus was born the ill-fated Kharkov operation.

The Caucasian Front and the Black Sea Fleet were supposed to liberate the Crimea. This attempt ended tragically, which will also be discussed in a separate chapter.

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The main efforts were in the zone of the Western Front with the involvement of Kalininsky. Again created the western direction, headed by Zhukov, he remained the commander of the Western Front. He was given the goal of encircling and destroying Army Group Center. The Germans kept more than 70 divisions in the Moscow direction, so the General Staff and Headquarters continued to consider him the main one. From January 8 to April 20, 1942, the Rzhev-Vyazemskaya strategic offensive operation was carried out; in fact, there were several of them: Sychevsko-Vyazemskaya, Mozhaisk-Vyazemskaya, Vyazemskaya airborne and Rzhevskaya. 95 divisions and 46 brigades, 1 million 059 thousand people, were thrown into action. Human losses: irretrievable - 272,320 people. (25.7%), general - 776,889 (73.4%).

During the offensive, the Soviet troops completed the liberation of the Moscow and Tula regions, as well as a number of areas of the Kalinin and Smolensk regions, but failed to carry out the main plan. Huge losses speak for themselves. In general, two major offensive operations in this direction — Moscow and Rzhev-Vyazemskaya — cost the Red Army dearly: total losses - 1 million 147 thousand 844 people, non-refundable — 411 thousand 908 people. If we take Zhukov's Western Front separately, we get total losses - almost 700 thousand people, irretrievable - a quarter of a million.

In the light of these events, the conclusion of N.G. Pavlenko (p. 291):

"A military catastrophe did not occur only because the enemy was greatly weakened."

Stalin drew other conclusions. He wanted to ensure that 1942 became the year of the final defeat of the German fascist troops and the liberation of the Soviet land from the Nazi scoundrels.

So he thought at the end of February. In March, under pressure from losses and exhortations from Shaposhnikov, Stalin agreed to a transition to strategic defense; Of course, the transition was meant to be temporary. But even this forced step cannot be taken literally. Formally proclaiming the transition to the defensive, he at the same time demanded the organization of several "local" offensive operations: Demyansk, Kursk-Lgov, Smolensk, Leningrad, Kharkov ...

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LUBA MARCH

The besieged Leningrad was a cause of serious worries and grief for Stalin. More recently, `justifying the war with Finland, he said:

"The war was necessary, since peace negotiations with Finland did not produce results, and the security of Leningrad had to be ensured unconditionally, because its security is the security of our Fatherland. Not only because Leningrad represents 30-35 percent of the defense industry of our country and, therefore, the fate of our country depends on the integrity and safety of Leningrad, but also because Leningrad is the second capital of our country ... »

He further assured his listeners that:

"WE ...HAVE learned quite serious concessions, which completely provide Leningrad both from the north, and from the south, and from behind pada..."

Stalin drew these bright prospects in April 1940. Less than a year and a half later, the completely provided cradle of the revolution and the second capital were under siege. Stalin, Tymoshenko and Zhukov did not have any plans for the defense of the city, they did not even bother to create strategic stocks of food and essentials. Two million inhabitants and two armies were caught between the Finnish troops 15 km north of the city and the Germans in the south, who were even closer. On November 22, the delivery of goods along the Ice Road through Ladoga began, but at first it was an extremely risky undertaking. A two-ton truck took no more than 100-150 kg, and still many fell through the ice. The victory at Tikhvin brought relief, but for many Leningraders it came too late. The railway through Tikhvin was single-track, a significant part of the tracks and several bridges were destroyed during the fighting. The first train, which proceeded to Volkhov and Voybokalo on January 1, on the 123rd day of the blockade, had rather a psychological significance. After that, the cargo was to be delivered to Ladoga - 40 km through the snow, and from there over the ice. The city's food supplies ran out in mid-December, after which life and death depended on the daily delivery of supplies. Daily low since

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supplied 1000 tons of food, but he remained out of reach. In December, after the opening of the railroad, on a good day 700 or 800 tons could be delivered, with one-third or more of non-food items - gasoline, ammunition and other military supplies. By the beginning of that year, Leningraders were dying of hunger by the thousands and in increasing numbers; a third of the labor force could not work because of weakness (see /letcke, Boa4 {o Zaiteta4, pp. 135-137).

Stalin knew, could not help but know, that in the current nightmare situation his fault was the greatest. He tried to rectify the situation, in particular, sent to Leningrad the best - from his point of view - generals. The success of the Tikhvin Offensive gave rise to bright hopes at Headquarters that the blockade of Leningrad would soon be lifted. The corresponding plan of operation was developed at the General Staff under Stalin's supervision.

To implement the plan, on December 17, the Volkhov Front was created under the command of Meretskov. The headquarters planned the complete defeat of the Germans near Leningrad. Four armies were allocated to the front - 4th, 52nd, 2nd shock (former 26th) and 59th, the last two from the Stavka reserve. On paper it looked menacing and impressive, the reality was sobering. After the liquidation of the corps link, the armies were actually equal in strength to the corps. They were hastily staffed and almost always poorly. In particular, the 2nd shock was such only in name. The term shock army originally meant that it should include a mechanized corps. At the end of 1941, the 2nd shock included 1 rifle division (327th), 6 rifle brigades and 6 separate ski battalions. In fact, it was still in the formative stage.

The Volkhov front had a superiority over the enemy, the 18th German field army, in manpower by 1.5 times, in guns and mortars by 1.6 times, in aircraft by 1.3 times. However, by the beginning of the operation, he had very little food and fodder, and only a quarter of the ammunition. Two armies, the 4th and 52nd, were exhausted by the previous battles, 3.5-4 thousand people remained in the divisions. Instead of the regular 10-12 thousand, the 2nd shock and 59th had a full set of personnel, but they had almost no gun sights, telephone cable and radio stations. In addition, the front was in need of automatic weapons and tanks. Meretskov asked to send him pain

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There were more tanks, cars and artillery tractors, but the Headquarters decided that heavy equipment could not be effectively used in forests and swamps. It was a costly miscalculation.

The troops of the front were not ready for a big offensive, and Meretskov asked to postpone the operation. The Stavka agreed, but, given the difficult situation in Leningrad, gave a delay only until January 7, 1942. Of all the missing supplies, only gun sights appeared: they were personally delivered by plane by the head of the GAU, General Voronov. Meretskov recently emerged from the dungeons of the NKVD, where he was treated so successfully that during meetings with Stalin he was allowed to sit alone all the time. The representative of the Headquarters was the sinister Mekhlis. All this prompted Meretskov to be accommodating.

During the operation, the Volkhov Front was to cross the Volkhov and break the blockade of Leningrad by destroying the Mgin group; this was planned to be carried out by the forces of three armies: the 2nd shock of Sokolov, the 59th of Galanin and the 4th of Ivanov - together with the 54th army of Fedyuninsky. This army was outside the blockade ring, but subordinated to Khozin's Leningrad Front - don't ask why. In addition, the army of Fedyuninsky was all that the Leningrad Front could allocate for the operation. In the southern direction, the 92nd Army was supposed to liberate Novgorod, as well as cut off the escape routes of the enemy units, which were attacked by Kurochkin's North-Western Front. The terrain in the area of the operation was wooded and swampy. In winter, frozen swamps and rivers were passable. The possibility of the case dragging on until spring was not considered.

The front launched an offensive on January 7, without waiting for the concentration of all units. Two battalions of the 52nd Army and two divisions of the 59th were able to cross the Volkhov. The 4th Army was stuck, the 2nd Shock Army entered the battle only on January 8 - the order to advance was received a day late. On January 10, the Stavka ordered to stop the offensive - the fire superiority of the enemy was obvious. The occupied bridgeheads had to be abandoned. The offensive failed. The Germans completely mistook him for reconnaissance in battle. The inevitable personnel changes began. For poor leadership, the Stavka dismissed the commander of the 2nd shock army, Lieutenant General G.G. Sokolov, former Deputy People's Commissar of the NKVD, he was replaced by Lieutenant General N.K. Klykov, who

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ry had previously commanded the 52nd Army. The 52nd Army was received by Lieutenant General V.F. Yakovlev.

On January 13, the offensive resumed. The main thrust of the nano-force of the 2nd shock army in the direction of Lyuban, it was supported from the flanks by the 59th and 52nd. Due to the stubborn resistance of the enemy, the advance was slow - in 10 days of fighting only 6 km. Advancing in the forest in deep snow, the troops did not have freedom of maneuver, and supplies were difficult. On January 25, it was possible to break through the enemy defenses, but only in the direction of the main attack and on the left flank of the 59th Army. The 13th Cavalry Corps was brought into the breach. By the end of January, the 2nd shock wedge advanced up to 70-75 km in a narrow wedge and engulfed the enemy's Luban-Chudov grouping from the south-west. Towards her in the general direction of Lyuban, the 54th Army struck. By the end of March, with heavy losses, its troops advanced 22 km and reached the approaches to Lyuban from the northeast. After that, the offensive stopped, the Soviet troops could not complete the encirclement of the enemy.

The 92nd and 99th armies with difficulty held the breakthrough corridor of the 2nd shock, which was stationed in the Luban ledge. Since the end of January, there has been an acute shortage of ammunition and food. The supply came along the only road, later it became known as the South. In February, Meretskov began to reinforce the 2nd shock army, transferring divisions and brigades from the 52nd and 59th armies to it. The supply of troops remained a bottleneck, so a new road was laid - the Northern one.

On February 17, instead of Mekhlis sent to the Crimea, Voroshilov, commander-in-chief of the northwestern direction, arrived at the headquarters of the Volkhov Front. Voroshilov visited the troops of the 2nd shock army, but this did not change anything.

The ledge, where the 2nd shock army was located, resembled a flask in its outlines, with its base 25 km wide directed to the west, with a rather narrow, 10-12 km, neck on the east side near the village of Myasnoy Bor. One blow to the throat could cut off the communications of the army. The enemy put constant pressure on Myasnoy Bor.

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The task was beyond the capacity of the Volkhov Front. In January-March, the German command reinforced its 18th Army with reserves in the amount of 11 divisions and one brigade. Moreover, 250 bombers of the 11th air fleet arrived in the area of the breakthrough. The balance of forces in the Luban direction has changed. Since March, the enemy began to inflict sensitive counterattacks on the flanks of the 2nd shock. On March 19, German troops managed to cut it off from the rest of the front.

On March 27, the troops of the 52nd and 59th armies, at the cost of heavy losses, laid a 5-km passage in the German ring, but the position of the 2nd shock remained difficult. With the beginning of the spring thaw, there was a smell of catastrophe. Roads and columned paths through swamps and forest thickets became impassable. The delivery of food and ammunition to the encircled was increasingly carried out by aircraft, but in completely insufficient quantities. Surrounded by the Red Army dug out from under the snow and ate the corpses of dead and fallen horses. Live horses were guarded by reinforced outfits, and soon these horses began to be taken out of the encirclement. The Germans dropped propaganda leaflets with prisoner passes from aircraft.

The supply of troops worsened every day. When even horse-drawn carts could not pass on the roads due to muddy roads, groups of soldiers and local residents had to carry loads on themselves for a distance of 30-40 km. On April 10, ice began to drift on the Volkhov, and until floating bridges were built, the supply of troops became even more scarce.

The failure of the operation was obvious, but the Headquarters still demanded to go on the offensive. It began on April 3, 30 km south of Lyuban in the direction of the village of Apraksin Bor. As before, there was no success. From the end of March, the 54th Army resumed oncoming battles and diverted large enemy forces, but this was not enough. On April 19, Klykov was relieved of his post as commander of the 2nd Shock Army - due to illness (sometimes they say - as a punishment). On April 20, the army was received by the deputy commander of the front, General A.A. Vlasov. He was in good standing with Stalin - he left the encirclement near Kiev and distinguished himself in battles near Moscow. The next day, Stalin liquidated the Volkhov Front, which entered the

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becoming Leningrad. Meretskov left for the western direction to Zhukov, the 2nd shock was now under the command of General M.S. Khozin. Together with a member of the Military Council, Zhdanov, he convinced the Supreme Commander that the united front would be able to break through the blockade of Leningrad. |

On April 30, Vlasov received an order to stop offensive attempts and switch to a tough defense. The 2nd shock continued to hold the captured ledge, but its position at that time was close to impossible. The trenches were flooded with water, corpses floated all around. Fighters and commanders existed from hand to mouth - without bread, without salt. Cases of cannibalism were noted. There was no chlorine left to disinfect water, medicines ran out. Due to the lack of boots, one had to walk on the water in felt boots. The Germans resumed attacks on the communications of the 2nd shock.

Air supply was meagre. Soviet aviation delivered approximately 300-350 tons of cargo per month to the encircled. In contrast, the Germans transferred 5,000 tons to the Demyansk pocket every month.

Khozin very soon regretted that he had taken Meretskov's farm under his command. On May 11, he sent a report to the Headquarters, in which he proposed to abandon the advance made in the winter by the 2nd shock army and withdraw it back - approximately to the middle of the Luban ledge. He also suggested separating the Volkhov Group of Forces from the Lenfront into an independent operational formation, i.e. actually restore the Volkhov Front.

At this time, everyone at Headquarters was full of trouble: in the Crimea, the failure of Kozlov's troops was indicated, the next day Timoshenko's big offensive began in the Kharkov region. In addition, on that day, Vasilevsky began to fulfill the duties of Chief of the General Staff instead of Shaposhnikov, who had fallen ill in the hospital. Khozin received a verbal order to prepare the withdrawal of the 2nd shock army.

On May 14, the directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command No. 170379 ordered that Vlasov's army be withdrawn even further than Khozin had asked: to completely clear the ledge, retaining only a foothold on the river. Volkhov.

On May 15, Khozin reported to Stalin a plan for the successive withdrawal of the 2nd Shock Army from line to line. Meanwhile, Vlasov

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reported on his difficulties: the lack of road battalions and the shortage of fuel for cars. The army troops will be ready for withdrawal to the intermediate line no earlier than May 23. In addition, the roads were occupied by the retreating three rifle divisions and the [3rd cavalry corps. The heavy equipment that Meretskov was denied in January would now have to be
not by the way.

The delay in the withdrawal of troops proved fatal. The Germans figured out the Soviet intentions and decided not to let the 2nd strike out of the almost closed boiler. On May 22, the commander of the German 18th Army, Colonel General Lindemann, attacked the exit from the Luban salient with significant forces: two infantry divisions from the north and two infantry divisions and an infantry brigade from the south. The neck was defended by only two Soviet divisions of a very weakened composition - each with 3 thousand people. Khozin did not come to their aid in time. On May 30, the Germans cut off the exit from the ledge. The cauldron contained 7 divisions and 6 brigades belonging to the 2nd shock, 52nd and 59th armies. Soon they were all given under the command of Vlasov.

According to | June, more than 40 thousand soldiers and commanders of the Red Army were surrounded. They had 300 guns of various calibers, 545 mortars, 28 anti-aircraft guns, 409 anti-tank guns, 60 ChTZ tractors, 31 STZ tractors, 36 ZIS-5 vehicles, 15 GAZ-A and AA vehicles. Food stocks at reduced rates were enough for 10-12 days.

Efforts to break through the encirclement began immediately. 31| In May, an unsuccessful attempt was made by rifle units and a tank brigade of the 59th Army. A blow from inside the boiler was also unsuccessful. On June 3, another rifle brigade and a separate tank battalion attacked. Again there was no result. June 5 — another setback. All this time, Vlasov's troops were subjected to intensive bombardment from the air, and the 46th Rifle Division suffered especially.

On June 8, Khozin was removed from his post with the following wording:

"For failure to comply with the order of the Headquarters on the timely and rapid withdrawal of the troops of the 2nd shock army, for the paper-bureaucratic methods of command and control of troops, for separating from

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troops, as a result of which the enemy cut the communications of the 2nd shock army and the latter was put in the exclusive difficult situation."

The Volkhov Front was restored, and Meretskov was placed at its head again. Khozin went to take his place to command the 33rd Army.

By June 22, a gap was made in the encirclement, through which more than 2 thousand wounded were taken out. However, the next day the Germans were able to close the ring again. Attempts to earn money continued. On the night of June 24, a corridor once again formed in Myasny Bor, units of the 2nd shock rushed into it. On June 24, in the afternoon, the Germans again closed the boiler and began to methodically destroy those surrounded by artillery fire.

The military council of the army ordered to leave the encirclement in small groups. On the evening of June 24, the 59th Army for the last time broke through a corridor up to 250 m wide. The road that ran along the gat, torn apart by artillery fire, along the flooring and narrow gauge railway, was called the "valley of death." Vlasov decided to withdraw the army headquarters from the encirclement. He distributed the members of the headquarters into brigades and divisions, and kept the military council, a special department, the chief of staff, the chief of communications and security guards with him - about 120 people in total. They were supposed to leave with the headquarters of the 46th division, but they could not find it, they came under heavy artillery and mortar fire and decided to return to their original place. There they were attacked by German infantry, they barely fought back. Vlasov experienced a psychological shock, he lost his orientation in time and space, could not respond correctly to events.

In total, from May to autumn 1942, 16 thousand people left Myasnoy Bor. In the "valley of death" and in the rearguard battles surrounded in June, 6 thousand people died. There are still 8,000 left in the encirclement - their fate is unknown. Most likely, a significant part of them died, the rest were captured. 10,000 wounded in the army hospital and medical battalions were captured, almost all of them were destroyed by the Germans. In total, according to Soviet official data, 146 thousand 046 people died during the entire operation. This figure can be justifiably increased by thousands by [0.

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Vlasov spent two more weeks in the forest with a small detachment. On July 12 he was taken prisoner. He preferred cooperation with the enemy. Soviet propaganda used this fact to the end. The catastrophe of the 2nd shock was deleted from the history of the war for a long time. Thanks to this, it was possible to pass over in silence the catastrophic miscalculations of Stalin and the General Staff.

CRIMEAN FAILURE

From December 26, 1941 to January 2, 1942, Soviet troops numbering over 80 thousand people. landed on the Kerch Peninsula and in the area of Feodosia. In this case, the ships of the Black Sea Fleet and the Azov Flotilla were used.

At this time, the entire Crimea, with the exception of Sevastopol, was captured by the 11th army of Manstein. The successful landing was a surprise for the Germans. A German infantry division, a reinforced infantry regiment and 2 Romanian brigades were attacked by a hefty Soviet force: 8 rifle divisions, 2 rifle brigades and 2 tank battalions. In a few days they advanced 100 km. Manstein, in his memoirs, assessed the situation as critical:

"If the enemy took advantage of the situation that had arisen and began to quickly pursue the 46th infantry division, and also decisively hit the Romanians retreating from Feodosia, then a hopeless situation would be created not only for this new sector of the front of the 11th army. The fate of the whole would be decided by the 11th army. A more resolute enemy could have paralyzed the entire supply of the army with a swift breakthrough on Dzhanikoy. The troops withdrawn from Sevastopol - the 170th and 132nd infantry regiments - could arrive in the area west or northwest of Feodosia no earlier than 14 days later.

But the Soviet troops stopped, most likely due to the need to replenish the personnel. Landed 82 thousand people, the losses amounted to almost 50%. The intentions of the Soviet command were far-reaching: two more landings at Perekopai Evpatoria, pinning down the enemy at Sevastopol and advancing on Simferopol. All this was supposed to happen in the first half of January, but it was not done. Meanwhile, the Germans and Romanians

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On January 5, we launched a counterattack and 3 days later returned Feodosia. Soviet troops retreated 10-20 km to the Karpacz Isthmus.

After that, the Soviet troops went on the offensive 4 times: February 27, March 3, March 26 and April 8-11. The results were modest: they pressed the Romanians somewhat, but did not achieve more. In general, the main result of the landing was that it reduced the pressure on Sevastopol, thanks to which the fortress held out for several more months. On April 21, the Headquarters created the North Caucasian direction headed by Budyonny, subordinating the Crimean Front, the Sevastopol defensive region and the North Caucasian military district, together with all naval and air forces in the Black Sea and the Caucasus, to him.

Prolonged marking time, combined with an isolated position on the peninsula, did not bode well. This, it seems, was understood in the Headquarters. Here is what Vasilevsky writes (p. 191):

"...the attempts made by the Crimean Front at that time from the Kerch Peninsula to liberate the entire Crimea, despite the great superiority in forces over the enemy, ended in failure. The Stavka ordered the front in the second half of April to stop the offensive and organize a strong, defense in depth. The Crimean Front then had at its disposal twenty-one rifle divisions, 3577 guns and mortars, 347 tanks, 400 aircraft (175 fighters and 225 bombers). The enemy had here ten and a half infantry divisions, 2472 guns and mortars, 180 tanks and also up to 400 aircraft. Thus, our superiority was evident.

Although Vasilevsky does not talk about this, but in February - April 1942, the losses of the Crimean Front amounted to 226 thousand 370 people. According to other sources, Manstein had 5 German infantry divisions and 1 armored plus 2 Romanian infantry divisions and

motorized brigade "Groddek" (Romanian regiment, 2 German battalions, German headquarters). He believed that the Soviet troops had a two-fold superiority in forces, but decided to attack anyway.

The disposition of the Soviet troops along the front was asymmetrical. Southern section, from Koi-Asan to the coast of the Black Sea

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rya (length 8 km), had well-equipped defensive positions. They were occupied by 2 divisions of the 44th Army. The northern section of the front (16 km), from Koi-Asan to Kiet, curved slightly to the west in an arc. Kozlov's main forces were concentrated in this ledge and nearby. 10 km east of the front line was the narrow 15 km Parpach Isthmus, which connected the Kerch Peninsula with the rest of the Crimea. Further east, towards Kerch, the peninsula expanded. Thus, the Soviet command could create a defense in depth, which would be very difficult for the enemy to overcome.

Manstein's plan (Operation Bustard Hunt) was to strike where it was least expected - at the southernmost point of the front line. He sent half of his forces there: 3 infantry and the only tank division, as well as the [Groddek] brigade. On the northern, left, flank of Manstein, the Germans and Romanians created the threat of an offensive, tying up the Soviet troops. The operation was a risky venture. If Kozlov had guessed the Germans' plan, disaster awaited them. Manstein wanted to carry out the operation in mid-April, but for various reasons it was postponed to May. The element of surprise was lost, especially since the Soviet command received a warning about the upcoming attack from the choir.

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All the same, Kozlov failed to prepare, or rather, failed to determine the direction of the main attack. At dawn on May 8, after massive air preparation, the Germans broke through the Soviet defenses, created a gap 5 km wide and deepened 8 km. It was only one battalion, but it included a platoon of sappers who quickly built bridges across the anti-tank ditch. A heavy downpour the next day delayed the introduction of a tank division into battle, but even before the rain, the Groddek motorized brigade managed to cut off the 44th Army from its rear. || In May, Manstein's tanks reached the northern coast of the Kerch Peninsula, followed by the 170th Infantry Division and the Romanian Cavalry Brigade. 8 Soviet divisions got into the boiler. On the same day, Stalin and Vasilevsky sent an angry directive to Budyonny:

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"The Military Council of the Crimean Front, including Kozlov, Mekhlis, lost their heads, to this day they cannot contact the army-MI ..."

The headquarters demanded "not to let the enemy through", but it was too late. On the evening of May 14, the Germans reached the outskirts of Kerch. On May 15, 1942, the Stavka ordered: "Don't surrender Kerch, organize defense like Sevastopol", but these spells did not help. The next day, the 170th German division occupied Kerch. On May 19, hostilities on the Kerch Peninsula ceased, only the remnants of the Soviet troops continued to resist in the Adzhimushkay quarries.

The Crimean Front (250 thousand people) for 12 days of fighting irrevocably lost 65% of its personnel - 162,282 people. German losses amounted to 7.5 thousand. In addition, as it is written in the "History of the Great Patriotic War":

"... it was not possible to carry out the evacuation in an organized manner. The enemy captured almost all of our military equipment and heavy weapons and later used them in the fight against the defenders of Sevastopol.

Meanwhile, a partial evacuation did take place; it lasted from May 15 to 20. Barges, seiners, minesweepers, boats, longboats and tugboats, torpedo and patrol boats were assembled in the Kerch region from the nearest bases and ports. In total, they managed to take out about 140,000 people.

On June 4, 1942, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command declared the command of the Crimean Front guilty of "the unsuccessful outcome of the Kerch operation." Organizational conclusions followed:

Army commissar 1st rank Mekhlis was removed from the posts of deputy commissar of defense and head [of the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army and demoted to corps commissar.

Lieutenant General Kozlov was removed from the post of front commander and demoted to the rank of major general.

Divisional commissar Shamanin was removed from his post as a member of the Front's Military Council and demoted to brigade commissar.

Major General Eternal was removed from the post of chief of staff of the front.

Lieutenant General Chernyak and Major General Kolganov were removed from their posts as army commanders and demoted to half KOVNIKOV.

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Major General Nikolaenko was removed from his post as Commander of the Air Force of the front and demoted to the rank of colonel.

| July Manstein received the rank of Field Marshal. On July 4, the Pravda newspaper and the Soviet Information Bureau reported that the Soviet troops had left Sevastopol. By this time, little was left of the fortress. Starting from June 7, Manstein methodically destroyed it with the help of aircraft and artillery, skillfully avoiding bloody street battles.

I think it's worth giving a postscript to this story. In Soviet and post-Soviet literature about the war, it became customary to consider the representative of the Headquarters Mekhlis as the main culprit for the failure of the Crimean operation. This cliché, however, hardly reflects the real state of affairs.

Reputation L.Z. Mehlis in the Red Army was extremely sinister. He came from Stalin's personal secretariat, from where Yezhov and Malenkov also appeared. Stalin never doubted the personal loyalty of Lev Zakharchov, so he threw him into the most critical areas. In 1930, Mekhlis became the editor of Pravda and the head. Department of Press and Publishing of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks. In December 1937, at the height of the Yezhovshchina, he was appointed to the post of head of the Heads of the PUR, the Political Directorate of the Red Army. Being an enthusiast of repressions, he willingly traveled to the military districts, leaving a trail of blood everywhere. On his orders, most command personnel in the Far East were repressed. In September 1940, when the institution of commissars was temporarily abolished, Mekhlis was appointed People's Commissar of State Control, but with the outbreak of war, he returned to his old position of Deputy People's Commissar of Defense and Head of GlavPUR. Mekhlis deeply despised the military and tried to stay away from them, even refused to drink tea with them. It is not surprising that in the army he was feared and hated.

For this reason, it is impossible to hear anything positive about Mekhlis. True, Simonov, giving a negative assessment of his activities in the Crimea, nevertheless added:

"I did not talk about this at all in order to once again commemorate Mekhlis with an unkind word, who, by the way, was a man of impeccable personal courage and did everything he did not out of the intention of personally becoming famous. He was deeply convinced that he was doing the right thing, and that is why historically

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From a theoretical point of view, his actions on the Kerch Peninsula are fundamentally interesting. This was a man who, in that period of the war, without entering into any circumstances, considered everyone who preferred a convenient position (a hundred meters from the enemy) not a convenient one (fifty) as a coward. He considered everyone who simply wanted to protect the troops from possible failure as a nickel; He considered everyone who realistically assessed the strength of the enemy to be unsure of his own strength. Mekhlis, for all his personal readiness to give his life for the Motherland, was a pronounced product of the atmosphere of 1937-1938.

During the Finnish war, Mekhlis ended up in one of the divisions that were encircled. When it became possible to take out a limited number of people from there, he stayed, sending a group of correspondents in his place. Later, together with the commander, he led the way out of the encirclement of this division.

Mekhlis, for all his Bolshevik bloodthirstiness, tried to be the best of the best (Moeyoge, p. 306):

"...the only way to fight anti-Semitism is if you are a Jew, be brave, the most honest, pure as crystal, an exemplary person, especially in terms of human dignity."

It is hard to get rid of the feeling that, although Mekhlis, like most political commissars, was primarily an overseer and had little understanding of military affairs, they hang all the dogs on him precisely because of his nationality. Here is a suitable, in my opinion, illustration of this process. When in the early 1930s the Politburo discussed the issue of demolishing the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, Stalin, Kirov and several others were in favor of such a decision. Kaganovich remarked: "The Black Hundreds will only blame me." He looked into the water. Modern anti-Semites firmly believe that the decision to blow up the temple was made on the initiative of Kaganovich.

Let's return, however, to the Crimea. From the very beginning, Mekhlis began to seek from the Headquarters to replace the leadership of the Crimean Front. In January, the chief of staff of the front, F.I. Tolbukhin, his place was taken by the General Staff Officer Eternal, who arrived with Mekhlis. After another unsuccessful offensive by the troops of the front, Mekhlis wrote to Stalin:

"I hesitated for a long time to report to you about the need to change the commander of the front, Kozlov, knowing our difficulties in

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commanders of this magnitude. Now, nevertheless, I decided to raise the question of the need to remove Kozlov before the Stavka.

This is followed by features to the portrait of Kozlov: "lazy, inept", "overrated master of the peasants"; does not like painstaking, everyday work, is not interested in operational issues, trips to the troops are "a punishment for him"; unknown among the troops of the front, does not enjoy authority, "dangerously deceitful."

We have no way of verifying these claims. They are presented only to show both sides of the events. Mekhlis asked instead of Kozlov to send N.K. Klykova or K.K. Rokossovsky. Both were busy at that time: the first - in the Luban operation, the second - near Sukhinichi on the Western Front. The real candidate was the commander of the 51st Army, V.N. Lvov, but Mekhlis did not achieve his appointment either. The day before the start of the German offensive, he repeated his request. Stalin's answer of May 9 is worth quoting in full:

"Crimean Front, comrade Mekhlis:

I received your cipher No. 254. You hold on to the strange position of an outside observer who is not responsible for the affairs of the Crimean Front. This position is very convenient, but it is rotten through and through. On the Crimean front, you are not an outside observer, but a responsible representative of the Headquarters, responsible for all the successes and failures of the front and obliged to correct the mistakes of the command on the spot. You, together with the command, are responsible for the fact that the left flank of the front turned out to be extremely weak. If "the whole situation showed that the enemy would attack in the morning", and you (as in the text) did not take all measures to organize a rebuff, limiting yourself to passive criticism, then so much the worse for you. So, you still have not understood that you were sent to the Crimean Front not as a State Control, but as a responsible representative of the Stavka. You are demanding that we replace Kozlov with someone like Hindenburg. But you must know that we do not have Hindenburgs in reserve. Your affairs in the Crimea are not difficult, and you could handle them yourself. If you used ground attack aircraft not for side affairs, but against the tanks and manpower of the enemy, the enemy would not break through the front and the tanks would not pass. You don't have to be a Hindenburg to understand

this simple thing, sitting for 2 months on the Crimean front. Nr 1281/sh. STALIN".

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This is a rich document. First of all, such a detail. Modern authors almost without exception accuse Mekhlis of excessive interference in the affairs of the command, Stalin, on the contrary, reproaches him for holding on to the "strange position of an outside observer." A week before the complete defeat, Stalin characterizes the situation in the Crimea as uncomplicated. Quite possibly, this is how it seemed from Kuntsevo and from the Kremlin. Giving recommendations on the use of attack aircraft, Stalin reveals complete ignorance of the real situation. At that time, the Crimean Front had only 1] Il-2 attack aircraft at its disposal.

Stalin's excursion into military history shows that the Soviet commander-in-chief is familiar with it by hearsay. The example of Hindenburg as a commander capable of saving a difficult situation does not sound convincing. Recalled from retirement in 1914, the 67-year-old Hindenburg was only listed as the commander of the 8th Army, which inflicted catastrophic defeats on Russian troops in East Prussia. In fact, the army was led by Colonel-General Erich Ludendorff. Instead of mentioning Hindenburg three times, Stalin could say that he had no Mansteins in reserve. Because the defeat of the Soviet group in the Crimea was only the beginning of Stalin's troubles with Manstein. He will still give the leader a lot of grief at the beginning of forty-three.

One general remark should be made here. Recognizing or noting the military talents of the German generals, I do not at all try to present them as examples for the youth. Many of them, like, for example, Guderian and Manstein, not being Nazis, at first wholeheartedly supported the conquest plans of their Fuhrer. As for the Nazi atrocities, after the war they, not always considering the facts, tried to dissociate themselves from them. They claimed, in particular, that they had never performed the so-called. Hitler's "commissar's" order, which allowed Jews and political workers to be dealt with on the spot. This is mostly a lie. Perhaps they did not shoot themselves, but they calmly turned a blind eye to how others did it. In the jurisdiction of Guderian, the Kaminsky brigade was formed, which was so mired in atrocities against the civilian population that the Germans

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I had to calm her down. Manstein in his book of memoirs never touches on the Jewish theme. Meanwhile, when he was appointed commander of the 11th Army, he personally drafted his first order, which was thickly stuffed with anti-Semitism (Egefach wop HoppePoen, p. 41).

Let's return to our story. Manstein, one of the most talented generals of the Second World War, was too tough for the Soviet command. Stalin did not understand the affairs and concerns of the Crimean group, otherwise he would not have subordinated it to the North Caucasian direction of Budyonny, who had previously shown his complete uselessness and helplessness on all the fronts entrusted to him. In January, the Crimean Front could cause serious trouble for the Germans. However, he stood still for almost two months - due to the indecision of the command and the slow replenishment of personnel. In the future, repeated unsuccessful attempts to advance should have alerted the Headquarters. If it was all about bad command, then he should have been replaced. If this did not help, it would be wiser to evacuate the Crimea. Therefore, the main reason for the failure is the inattention of the Headquarters and, above all, Stalin.

There is another interesting document - a letter written in 1966 by General Kozlov to his former deputy General A.I. Smirnov-Nesvitsky:

"11.2.66

Hello Alexander Ivanovich!

Thank you very much for not forgetting the disgraced old general. My disgrace has been going on for almost 25 years.

The events of those days often come to mind in my memory. It is hard to remember them, especially because the blame for the death of all our regiments lies not only with us, the direct participants in these battles, but also with the leadership that was exercised over us. I am not referring to Mekhlis, a layman in operational art, but to the commander of the North Caucasus direction and Headquarters. I also mean Oktyabrsky, who, in fact, did not fight, but prevented Petrov from fighting and played tricks on the Crimean Front. Now he's become a hero! Even his member [the military council of the Black Sea Fleet] was given a Hero [the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, Vice Admiral N.M. Kulakov was assigned 05/07/1965].

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They crawled out on the neck of the Crimean Front. Without this, there would be no Sevastopol. Back in December, he would have left it to the enemy. Everything was heading towards this, and his arrival in Tonnelnaya [the seat of the Crimean Front] pursued the goal of obtaining permission to leave Sevastopol. Now the shout is heard everywhere: "Glory to the Black Sea sailors for Sevastopol and the Crimea!" As if they did everything, and the Ground Forces had nothing to do with it. Although in reality it was the other way around. They were the largest part - hardly enough | /10 of the total composition of the troops that attacked and defended the Crimea.

For some reason, everyone forgot, even the General Staff, that after we left the Crimea, Sevastopol lasted only about a month. The sailors go out of their way to prove that they held the Crimea and Sevastopol, and inspired this to the Central Committee of the CPSU, and in all speeches and in the press this is advertised very widely. Thus, the honor, merits and dignity of those who laid down their lives for the Crimea are offended.

I really regret not laying my head there. I would not hear injustices and insults, for the dead have no shame. But I did not succeed, despite the fact that I was leaving Yenikale with Volkov's rearguard units. Then there were no bosses, either small or big, there, everything passed into the power of Budyonny and his deputy Cherevichenko.

Your information about Oktyabrsky's arrival at Tonnelnaya is accurate. I demanded his departure to Sevastopol. With his slander to Headquarters, he only delayed the start of the Kerch operation, pulling out the 1st Marine Brigade from the | th echelon of the landing to the Headquarters,

who were sent to Sevastopol.

These are the things that are going on... D. KOZLOV."

As we can see, Mekhlis occupies a very modest place in the list of Kozlov's ill-wishers. Dmitry Timofeevich Kozlov (1896-1967) in 1940-1941 He was the head of the Main Directorate of Air Defense of the Red Army. After the Crimea, he commanded the 24th Army, then was deputy commander of a number of fronts, after the war he served as deputy commander of a military district. The rank of lieutenant general was returned to him, but he did not go further.

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Mekhlis, in the last days of the operation, was also looking for death and was evacuated one of the last on the evening of May 19, having received a light wound in the head. In a telegram to Stalin dated May 14 we read:

"We have dishonored the country and should be damned. We will fight to the last. Enemy aviation decided the outcome of the battle.

Arriving in Moscow, Mekhlis, according to Khrulev, collapsed on his knees in front of Stalin in the leader's office. Stalin was at first confused, then said:

"Don't kill yourself like that. Anything can happen in a war."

Mekhlis was no longer appointed representative of the Headquarters, but he was a member of the Military Councils on several fronts - like Khrushchev, Bulganin or Zhdanov. After the war, he again became Minister of State Control. In 1950, in the course of an anti-Semitic campaign, he was retired "for health reasons." He died in Moscow in February 1953, at the height of the "Doctors' Plot", and was buried in the Kremlin wall.

KHARKIV ADVENTURE

In May, at the height of the defeat of the Soviet troops in the Crimea, the Kharkov offensive operation unfolded. She had a background. On January 18, 1942, as part of the winter offensive, three armies of Timoshenko's South-Western direction - the 6th (A.M. Gorodnyansky), the 9th (F.M. Kharitonov) and the 57th (K.P. Podlas) - attacked the Germans near Izyum along the Seversky Donets. Having broken through the German positions, the Soviet infantry, skiers and cavalry rushed behind enemy lines and captured two important junction stations - Barvenkovo and Lozovaya. The Germans brought their tanks and motorized infantry into action, as a result, by January 31, further advance was stopped. All the same, the Barvenkovsky ledge remained in Soviet hands, threatening Kharkov in the north and Donbass in the south.

In early March, Moskalenko's 38th Army attacked other German positions along the Seversky Donets, this time between Stary Saltov and the Pechenegs. For 4 days of heavy fighting, Soviet troops advanced 8 km. The fighting continued until the beginning of April, but more could not be achieved. Thus, another bridgehead arose - to the east of Kharkov. offensive

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action in other sectors of the South-Western Front did not produce results. Both described operations had the main goal to return Kharkov. This goal was not achieved, but Stalin was pleased. He loved it when his troops advance: you see, something will work out. The Supreme Commander ordered the command of the direction to submit their offensive plans to the Headquarters.

The corresponding document went to Moscow on March 22, it was signed by the commander in chief of the Timoshenko direction, a member of the Military Council Khrushchev and the chief of staff I.Kh. Bagramyan. This report is more political than military, but this is a sign of the times. First of all, practically nothing is said about the three attempts of a large offensive against Kharkov, Donbass and Kursk, which did not reach the goal. Meanwhile, in these battles, the troops of the South-Western direction lost from 110 to 130 thousand people.

Information about the enemy was only partially correct. The report predicted that a major German offensive was being prepared, starting in mid-May. However, its direction was determined as follows:

"It is most likely that, along with frontal attacks against the Western Front, the enemy will launch an offensive with large forces of motorized mechanized units from the Bryansk and Orel regions, bypassing Moscow from the south and southeast, in order to reach the Volga River in the Gorky region and isolate Moscow from the most important industrial and economic centers of the Volga region and the Urals".

Soviet intelligence overlooked the delivery of German reinforcements to the Kharkov area. Therefore, Timoshenko and Bagramyan believed that the Germans in the Kharkov region had only 12 infantry and 1 tank division, greatly weakened by winter battles. In fact, there were 18 infantry divisions, 2 updated armored divisions and 3 smaller infantry groups. In addition, the Southwestern Front did not attach serious importance to the 17th Field Army, which could attack the Soviet forces from the south, and the Southern Front did not seem to provide intelligence to the neighbors. I had to pay for all these miscalculations later in full.

The goals of the Soviet troops in this theater were very ambitious:

"Regardless of this, the troops of the South-Western direction during the spring-summer campaign should strive to

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achievement of the main strategic goal - to defeat the opposing enemy forces and reach the Middle Dnieper (Gomel, Kyiv, Cherkasy) and further to the Cherkasy front, Pervomaik, Nikolaev ... "

To achieve these goals, it was proposed to use the troops of three fronts: Bryansk, South-Western and Southern. After that, the necessary funds were listed (Bagramyan, p. 94):

"In order to start broad active operations with the onset of summer, the Military Council asked the Headquarters to allocate from the resources of the center: rifle divisions - 32-34; tank brigades - 27-28; artillery regiments - 19-24; combat aircraft - 7956. In addition, to complete the troops with personnel up to 80 percent and weapons - up to 100 percent, more than 200 thousand people, a large number of weapons, military equipment, tractors, motor vehicles and horses were requested.

You don't have to take this request seriously. While doing it, Timoshenko and company were well aware that the Stavka was not in a position to allocate half a million troops to them, apart from everything else. Nevertheless, they demonstrated their readiness to attack Stalinist.

On March 27, Stalin and Shaposhnikov conferred in the Kremlin with the authors of the report. From the very beginning, the Chief of the General Staff noted that, in his opinion, the scale of the operation should be reduced. Before the visitors had time to object, the Supreme Commander said his word (Bagramyan, p. 59):

"With the timely and sufficiently complete allocation by the Headquarters for the South-Western direction of the requested reserves, weapons and replenishment of people, the offensive plan proposed by the Military Council would be acceptable. But the whole trouble lies in the fact that, unfortunately, we now in the center do not have reserves and other forces and means for such a large strengthening of the South-Western direction ... "

After that, the Supreme Commander ordered to focus on the task of liberating Kharkov. The considerations were to be submitted the next day. Bagramyan left Stalin's office as if on wings:

"I realized that at the head of our Armed Forces is not only an outstanding political figure of our time, but

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also a well-trained military leader in matters of military theory and practice. I fell asleep just before dawn.

These memoirs were published in 1977, a quarter of a century after the death of the leader. Was Bagramyan, who graduated from two military academies, really in such a religious enthusiasm for the military talents of Stalin? Another quote may help us:

"And the next day I didn't have time to open my eyes in the morning, as one of the adjutants of S.K. Timoshenko reported that a cutter was waiting for me to take measurements. There was, they say, an order to urgently sew a general's uniform for me. The measurement was taken, and in the evening I received a set of new uniforms and, not without pride, donned them.

At the second reception in the Kremlin, Stalin gave me an approving look, and I realized that it was he who made sure that my appearance had no flaws and corresponded to the military rank and official position.

I'm not saying, God forbid, that the new uniform shaped Bagramyan's opinion about Stalin, but that he didn't spoil it, that's for sure. However, someone else's soul is dark ...

The new plan of operation included more modest demands. The South-Western direction asked by April 15 to provide him with:

..10 rifle divisions, 26 tank brigades and 10 reinforcement artillery regiments, as well as to replenish the troops of the Southwestern and Southern Fronts with personnel up to 80% of the regular strength, and weapons, materiel, artillery and tanks - by 100% and allocate the required amount of ammunition.

Then there was another meeting with Stalin, where, in addition to the southwestern troika, Shaposhnikov, Vasilevsky and Zhukov were present. The Chief of the General Staff in his report proposed to switch to strategic defense. He also expressed objections to the operation in the Kharkov area. Stalin interrupted him and let Timoshenko speak. After that, the leader said that he understood Shaposhnikov's objections, but at the same time ordered Timoshenko to present a new plan of operation, relying on his own forces and means.

On April 8, Commander-in-Chief Timoshenko also assumed command of the Southwestern Front, Bagramyan similarly

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Zom became the chief of staff of this front. On April 10, the revised plan of the Kharkov operations went to Headquarters. It provided for strikes in converging directions from the Volchansk region and from the Barvenkovsky bridgehead. The goal is to defeat the Kharkov group of Germans, take Kharkov and create conditions for the liberation of Donbass.

All these tasks were assigned to the Southwestern Front. The southern front of Malinovsky was supposed to cover this offensive from the south. Here is how Vasilevsky puts it (p. 195):

"B.M. Shaposhnikov, taking into account the riskiness of an offensive from the operational bag, which was the Barvenkovsky ledge for the troops of the Southwestern Front, intended for this operation, made a proposal to refrain from conducting it. However, the direction command continued to insist on its proposal and assured Stalin of the complete success of the operation. He gave permission for it to be carried out and ordered [the headquarters to consider the operation an internal affair of the direction and not to interfere in any issues on it.

Stalin emerged from the situation as an experienced politician. Instead of discussing the problem in essence, he renamed it. Initially, the operation was scheduled for May 4, but due to delays in the delivery of reinforcements and weapons, it was postponed to [2nd.

Preparations for the operation were delayed for many reasons, primarily due to the low level of command. Due to the spring thaw, not only the delivery of people and supplies slowed down, but also the laying of roads and the construction of an airport.

dromov. There was no plan for the subunits to reach their starting lines; this created confusion. By the start of the offensive, only half of the supporting artillery regiments had taken their assigned positions. German aviation bombed river crossings and other bottlenecks; this made it difficult to transport ammunition. As a result, before the start of artillery preparation, only one third of the required number of shells was in place.

Now let's see what happened on the other side of the front. Barvenkovsky (Izyumsky) ledge was a thorn in the eye of the German command. Army Group South, which after the death of Reichenau was headed by von Bock, planned the liquidation of this Soviet bridgehead. The operation was given the code name Friedrich. The plan was simple. Two groupings,

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stepping towards each other from the north (Paulus) and the south (Kleist), they were supposed to meet at Izyum. At the same time, the 6th Army was to move south along the western bank of the Seversky Donets, which thus covered its left flank. The maximum protection was during the flood, so the start of the operation was scheduled for April 22. Hitler and Halder did not like this plan, and they proposed their own, Friedrich P. The difference was that the 6th Army was advancing along the eastern bank of the river. At the same time, the OKH allocated an additional 2 divisions. These reinforcements traveled by rail to Rovno and Gfodno, but further, due to traffic jams, they had to overcome more than 700 km on their own. Von Bock initially argued with Hitler, but was forced to comply. April 30, he approved the plan "Friedrich P" with the beginning [May 8.

May came, the rivers entered the banks, the roads dried up. [Army Group "South" saw the increased activity of Soviet troops in the Barvenkovsky and Volchansky ledges, but Hitler and Halder refused to believe that a Russian attack on Kharkov was being prepared.

It nevertheless began at dawn [May 2. According to Soviet sources, the advantage of the Red Army in this operation was not very significant: 2:1 or 1.5:1 in men and 2:1 in tanks. The Germans paint a different picture. Paulus' 6th Army reported that 12 divisions and 300 tanks rolled on it in the first waves of attackers (LetKe, Egot Mosso \... p. 273). Bock informed Halder that the 6th Army was "fighting for its existence."

The 8th Corps of the 6th Army suffered the worst in the northwestern corner of the Barvenkovsky bridgehead. The Soviet 6th Army, the Babkin task force and the 28th Army of D.I. fell upon him. Ryabyshev from the Volchansky ledge. By noon they had broken through the German defenses. By evening, the tanks of the 28th Army were 15 km from Kharkov.

In two days, Bobkin's group pushed back the 8th German Corps to the river. Berestovaya and cut it off from the Kleist army group in the south. By the night of the second day, the gap on the left flank of the 8th Corps at Zmiev widened to 15 km. On the right flank, the gap was even wider, through which the Soviet cavalry went to Krasnograd. The 28th Army advanced along the Volchansk-Kharkov road. The only obstacle in its path was a small group of Germans surrounded in the area of the village of Ternovaya. One

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but on the afternoon of the 13th, Paulus launched two panzer divisions into a counterattack. At the same time, the Germans had complete air superiority.

On May 14, despite the gaps that had formed in the enemy's defense, Timoshenko still did not dare to bring the tanks and cavalry destined for the second phase of the operation into the breach. The southern wing of the Soviet troops continued to advance. Noskov's 6th Cavalry Corps advanced 30 km in two days. At the same time, the Soviet troops here did not have any air support. It was assumed that it would be carried out by the aviation of the Southern Front, but due to poor coordination, this order was not carried out. All available Soviet planes were thrown into the zone of the 28th Army.

Bock, for his part, in solving the problem of helping the 6th Army, faced the following dilemma: either to reinforce it with units and formations assembled for the summer offensive, or to achieve the same result through Operation Friedrich. The field marshal preferred the latter, but he knew that this could not be done without military cunning. He reported to Hitler that the best thing to do was simply to strengthen Paulus, at the same time remarking to his chief of staff: "Now the Führer will choose a big decision ["Friedrich"]. The Commander-in-Chief will receive all the laurels, the scraps will remain for our share. Hitler chose the "big decision", at the same time ordering the deployment of aviation from the Crimea near Kharkov, where the Germans by that time had achieved a decisive turning point. It was decided to start the operation a day earlier.

On May 15, Timoshenko reported to Headquarters that the operation was developing successfully and the necessary conditions had been created for the troops of the Bryansk Front to be included in the offensive. The next day, the command of the direction did not see any threat from the south and ordered to continue the offensive on Kharkov.

On the 16th, Stalin read the report of the Southwestern Front and was very pleased. He reproached [the General Staff in the sense that, they say, at your insistence, I "almost canceled such a successfully developing operation." Indeed, in the presence of such nuggets as Stalin and Timoshenko, who needs the General Staff! Hitler felt similar emotions about the respective German institution.

On the morning of the 17th, Timoshenko launched his tanks of the second echelon, the 21st and 23rd tank corps, into the attack. air temperature

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ha for May was unusually high - 32 degrees Celsius. During the day, the tanks deepened by 7 km. By this time, the advanced rifle units were noticeably exhausted.

Contrary to the forecasts of Timoshenko and Bagramyan, Kleist on the same day launched an offensive according to the Friedrich plan. His group, located on the southern face of the Barvenkovsky salient, included the 1st tank and 7th field armies, as well as 2 Romanian corps. He did not have large reserves, but the air support was strong. Stormtroopers "thing" and | divisions and delivered two strikes: the 3rd bombers made the most action | of clear weather. Kleist's group threw into

the tank corps went from the south to Barvenkovo, and the 17th army from Slavyansk and Kramatorsk to Izyum. The goal was to cut through the positions of the 9th Army and encircle the Soviet forces in the Barvenkovsky salient.

The Soviet troops were taken by surprise. The Germans could not believe their eyes, watching how quickly the defense of the 9th Army collapsed. By the end of this hot day, Mackensen's tank corps had basically captured Barvenkovo, and the divisions of the left flank of the 17th Army had covered two-thirds of the distance to Izyum.

Front commander Malinovsky lost contact with the 9th Army and with the reserves sent to the area south of Izyum. Bagramyan (p. 106) believes that the Komfronte misplaced its forces and did not create a strong defense. He did not reveal his own guilt or the guilt of Commander-in-Chief Tymoshenko. Whatever the case, the air smelled of disaster. At 17.30, the commander-in-chief requested help from the Headquarters and received consent. However, these forces, 2 rifle divisions and 2 tank brigades, could only arrive on the Southern Front on 20 or 21 May. In light of the deteriorating situation in [.35] On May 18, Timoshenko ordered the 23rd Tank Corps to be sent to help the 9th Army, which had begun moving towards Kharkov the day before. At the same time, he asked the Headquarters for permission to stop the offensive on Kharkov, but was refused. By the evening of the same day, an order was given to remove the second tank corps, the 21st, from the Kharkov direction, and also send it against Kleist.

The situation was heating up with each passing hour. The regrouping of forces took considerable time. The tank corps did not leave the battle immediately: the 23rd - in the afternoon [May 8, the 21st - at 10 am on the 19th. By the evening Tymoshenko gave the order, later approved

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Headquarters, go on the defensive in the entire Barvenkovsky salient. Soviet sources usually call this decision too late. In addition, Khrushchev's attempts to get this permission from Stalin a little earlier are often mentioned. The reader gets the impression that if the offensive had been stopped a day earlier, everything would have turned out well. This, alas, is very far from the truth.

The plan for a massive offensive from a deep salient, an "operational pouch," was fundamentally flawed and risky. The details here played a secondary role, since it was, in the words of Arkady Belinkov, a design error. That is why Shaposhnikov and the General Staff objected to this operation. Pavlenko speaks with understandable indignation about this ill-fated plan, which was signed not only by the illiterate Timoshenko and Khrushchev, but also by Bagramyan, "who had previously graduated from two military academies and had solid experience in large staffs" (p. 296). Even if - in the best possible outcome - Timoshenko's troops took Kharkov, their position would be very difficult. Because further on stood a solid grouping of German troops, prepared for a flying offensive to the south, about which the Soviet command knew nothing. One way or another, the Germans were preparing for the elimination of the Barvenkovsky ledge, hence the Friedrich plan. Stalin and Timoshenko, for their part, saw to it that hundreds of thousands of Soviet soldiers perished without any benefit.

The Germans continued to advance. By the morning of May 23, the troops of the Kleist group united 19 km south of Balakleya with units of the 6th Army of Paulus. Bobkin's group and three armies - 6, E and 57th were surrounded. The escape routes to the east beyond the Seversky Donets were cut. The fighting continued until May 29, during which time 22 thousand people escaped from the encirclement. However, many more died or were captured. Simultaneously with the offensive in the area of the Barvenkovsky bridgehead, the Germans intensified their activity in the Volchansk direction, where they managed to encircle the second shock group of the Southwestern Front.

The results of the operation were depressing. Two bridgeheads, obtained recently with great bloodshed, were in the hands of the enemy. According to Soviet reports, the total losses of the troops of the South-Western direction for the period from May 10 to May 31, 1942 amounted to 266 thousand 927 people. Their structure is as follows: killed and buried

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nye on the territory not captured by the enemy - 13 thousand 556 people; the wounded and sick evacuated to hospitals - 46 thousand 314 people; 207,476 people were surrounded and died there or were taken prisoner (see Clan {2, KbarKot, p. 271). Among the dead were many generals: Deputy Commander of the Southwestern Front F.Ya. Kostenko, commanders A.M. Gorodnyansky and K.P. Podlas, commander of the army group L.V. Bobkin and many others. Together with Bobkin, his 15-year-old son died. Kostenko in September 1941 managed to escape from the encirclement near Kiev. But, apparently, you can't escape fate and Stalin ...

According to German data, during the battles for Kharkov, 239 thousand 36 prisoners were taken, 2026 guns, 1249 tanks and 540 aircraft were destroyed and captured.

When it came to analyzing the reasons for the failure, the Soviet military leaders did not let us down. The Military Council of the South-Western Direction in a report to the Headquarters of May 30, 1942 wrote:

"The well-conceived and organized attack on Kharkov turned out to be not fully secured against enemy attacks in the Barvenkovsky direction."

It turned out that the business of the South-Western direction was an offensive, as for guarding against a treacherous enemy, others should have taken care of this. Who is not said. Maybe the Headquarters, maybe a non-existent heavenly power.

Stalin's reaction was belated and oddly restrained. We know that a decision was already made regarding Crimea on June 4 to demote many and remove them from their posts. With Kharkov it was different. The Supreme Commander was silent for more than a month, and finally, at 2 a.m. on June 26, he dictated the following letter to Vasilevsky:

"To the Military Council of the Southwestern Front, here in Moscow, we are members of the Defense Committee (in fact, Stalin is not with anyone from the State Defense Committee. - V.R.) and people from [the General Staff - decided to remove Yugo from the post of Chief of Staff -Western Front comrade. Bagramyan. Tov. Baghrmryan does not satisfy the Headquarters not only as chief of staff, called upon to strengthen communications and leadership of the armies, but also does not satisfy the Headquarters as a simple informant who is obliged to honestly and truthfully report to the Headquarters on the situation at the front. Moreover, Comrade Bagramyan was unable to learn a lesson from

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the catastrophe that broke out on the Southwestern Front. In just three weeks, the Southwestern Front, thanks to its frivolity, not only lost the Kharkov operation, which was half won, but still managed to surrender 18 to 20 divisions to the enemy.

This is a catastrophe which, in its disastrous results, is tantamount to the catastrophe with Rennenkampf and Samsonov in East Prussia. After everything that happened Comrade. Bagramyan could, if he wanted to, learn a lesson and learn something. Unfortunately, this is not yet visible. Now, as before the catastrophe, the communication of the headquarters with the armies remains unsatisfactory, the information is of poor quality...

We are sending to you temporarily as Chief of Staff Deputy Chief of the General Staff Comrade. Bodin, who knows your front and can be of great service. Tov. Bagramyan is appointed Chief of Staff of the 28th Army. If tov. Bagramyan will show himself on the good side as the chief of staff of the army, then I will raise the question of giving him the opportunity later move on.

It is clear that the point here is not only Comrade. Bagramyans. We are also talking about the mistakes of all members of the Military Council, and above all Comrade. Timoshenko and comrade. Khrushchev. If we told the country in full about that catastrophe — with the loss of 18-20 divisions, which the front survived and continues to experience, then I am afraid that you would be treated very harshly ...

I wish you success.

June 26, 42 2.00.

I. STALIN.

The logical nonsense is striking. On the one hand, it was a catastrophe: "Thanks to its frivolity, the Southwestern Front not only lost the Kharkov operation, which was half won, but still managed to give up 18-20 divisions to the enemy." If you tell the people about it, this catastrophe, then the perpetrators will not be in trouble. On the other hand, there was only frivolity, so of the windy boys only Bagramyan was punished, and even then slightly. He was transferred to a less responsible job with a chance to improve. It looks like a collective farm meeting. For the disruption of the spring sowing campaign, brigadier Pupkin was transferred to a team leader for 3 months ...

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Stalin's softness is most likely due to the fact that he supported and made this operation possible. He did not admit it out loud, but he showed restraint in punishments. Moreover, among the perpetrators were two of his trusted henchmen - Timoshenko and Khrushchev. Bagramyan escaped punishment for company with them. Maybe that's why he remained grateful to the leader until the end of his life. His military career did not suffer (Pavlenko, p. 309):

"In less than three months, with the help of Zhukov, Bagramyan will be appointed commander of the 16th Army on the Western Front. A year and a half or two years later, we see Bagramyan at the head of the front."

As for the hundreds of thousands of dead and captured, the Supreme Commander did not remember them, and after the war they were completely erased from history for two decades.

HITLER'S NEW PLAN

Thanks to the perseverance or stubbornness of the Fuhrer, the Wehrmacht as a whole withstood the winter-spring onslaught of the Red Army. The bastions of the Eastern Front — Shlisselburg, Novgorod, Rzhev, Vyazma, Bryansk, Orel, Kursk, Kharkov and Taganrog — remained in German hands, although in the intervals between them Soviet troops were able to penetrate many kilometers to the west (14944e | Nap, H1\$+ ogu ... p. 241). True, the Germans paid a high price for the rigidity of their defense. Aviation was to supply some of these isolated bastions by air. The high accident rate in winter conditions and the transfer of aviation formations to other theaters of war greatly weakened the Luftwaffe. As for the ground forces, in many divisions no more than a third of the original composition remained. These losses were never fully recovered. The new divisions formed in the rear were often undermanned. Beginning in 1942, the number of Wehrmacht divisions became largely fictitious. The divisions, almost completely destroyed in the battles, continued to be part of the Wehrmacht. It was camouflage, they didn't get replacements. Often such divisions had two or three battalions.

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The question of the possibility of attacking in 1942 was debated as early as November 1941, before the failure of the attack on Moscow. Rundstedt claimed after the war that he had talked about the possibility of a retreat to Poland and Leeb. seemed to agree with it. Others were not so determined, but did not see the opportunity to continue the offensive. The Moscow fiasco and the harsh winter only intensified these sentiments. However, after Brauchitsch was eliminated, and the commanders of the army groups that carried out the invasion were removed one by one from the Eastern Front, no one dared to argue with Hitler.

The General Staff tried to besiege Hitler in another way: in order to continue the offensive, the army would need 800,000 reinforcements. Armaments Minister Speer said that the armaments industry could not lose so many workers. Hitler, as before, found the answer. He attracted the Romanians, Hungarians and Italians, and in the German ground forces he carried out a change in the organization. Now the infantry division had 7 battalions instead of 9. At the same time, the composition of the company was reduced from 189 to 80 soldiers. Stalin at the beginning of the war did something similar in the Red Army. Now two German divisions were approximately equal in number to one American or British one.

"So, if you think objectively and soberly, the prospects for Germany at that time were bad. The Soviet Union survived, it had human and material resources on its side, plus a coalition with America and England. the Red Army

was recovering from the shock, and it was more difficult to fight her than in 1941. In other words, in a long war, Germany did not have a serious chance of winning. Only a miracle or the intervention of unearthly forces could save her. This was clearly seen by many in Germany. Not without reason, back in November, the commander of the Reserve Army, Fromm, told Halder about the need for a truce. In a sense, the situation of 1914-1918 was repeated, when, after the victories of the first years, strategic exhaustion set in. Soviet tanks had not yet threatened Berlin, but that was little consolation. In 1918, [Germany had to capitulate when there was not a single enemy soldier on its territory.

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Hitler assessed the situation differently. Although the euphoria from the victory over France had long since passed, the Nazi leader and his associates did not want to and did not know how to reckon with the facts. They had nothing to say to their people. They dragged the country into a hopeless war that resulted in heavy losses. They committed many crimes and could not count on leniency. All they had to do was continue the war. Hitler therefore began to prepare a new great offensive.

Here it is worth citing data on the balance of forces on the Soviet-German front. First, the Wehrmacht. By March 1942, his total losses here amounted to more than 1 million people, or one-third of the invading forces. Replenishments for the same period were about 800 thousand. Thus, the total number of German forces in the East at that time was 2.8 million people, from which one should subtract 150 thousand people stationed in Finland and 200 thousand who performed police functions in the occupied territory (Taggat+, pp. 25-26). It turns out that Hitler had 2.4 million front-line troops. True, there were still half a million allied forces - Romanians, Hungarians, Italians, as well as Spanish and Slovak "volunteers", but their stamina and combat effectiveness were in doubt. In general, they were rather a burden for the Wehrmacht, because they absorbed its resources, primarily weapons. They were used for security or police functions, or were placed on quiet sections of the front.

To create an impression of strength, Hitler undertook a reorganization that amounted to downsizing. An infantry division now had 7 battalions instead of 9, and a company had 80 soldiers instead of the previous 180. Thanks to this, 20 new divisions appeared. In the tank troops, the policy was the same. In the spring of 1942, they numbered 3,300 tanks, 360 fewer than in the summer of 1941, but they were thinned out and 3 new tank divisions were scraped together.

Now let's look at the situation in the Red Army. In November 1941, its number was 4.2 million people. In the spring of 1942 - 4.9 million. By the end of June, the number of the Red Army reached 5.5 million people, plus 55,600 guns and mortars and 6,000 tanks. This was the equivalent of 410 divisions against 171 of Hitler. In addition to this, Stalin had a huge reserve, where 152 divisions were in the process of formation,

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107 brigades and 225 separate regiments. The Wehrmacht had only a slight superiority in aviation: 2750 aircraft against 2600 Soviet.

The Fuhrer at this time habitually underestimated the strength of the Red Army. German strategic intelligence was pretty bad in 1942, but strangely it didn't matter much. Hitler believed only in what coincided with his calculations. When the Department [of the Headquarters "Foreign Armies in the East" reported that Soviet enterprises in the Urals and other places were producing from 600 to 700 tanks a month, Hitler slammed his fist on the table and declared that this could not be. In fact, intelligence figures were hopelessly understated: Soviet tank production was 2,037 vehicles per month. [The German monthly issue at that time was 515.

Be that as it may, in 1942 I had to stretch my legs over my clothes. The attack on Moscow was too much for the Wehrmacht. The Fuhrer turned his eyes to the south, while he convinced himself that such a turn would bring a long-awaited victory.

Directive No. 41 (of April drawn up by him personally)

Fuhrer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht No. 55616/42

Fuhrer's Headquarters

04/04/1942.

14 copies

Top secret. Directive No. 41

The winter battle in Russia is drawing to a close. Thanks to the incomparable courage and selfless devotion of the soldiers of the Eastern Front, the German troops achieved a tremendous defensive success.

The enemy suffered heavy losses in men and equipment. In an attempt to make use of what at first appeared to him as successes, he spent a considerable amount of money this winter.

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new mass of its reserves intended for further operations.

As soon as the weather and the terrain allow, we must again seize the initiative and, thanks to the superiority of the German command and the German soldier, impose our will on the enemy.

Our goal is to finally destroy the remaining defensive potential of the Soviets and push them as far as possible from their centers of military industry.

For this purpose, all available troops, German and allied, will be used. At the same time, it is necessary under all circumstances to ensure the security of the occupied territories in Western and Northern Europe, especially on the coast.

1. General plan In accordance with the original plan of the Eastern Kam

Pania, the armies of the Central Sector will hold their positions firmly, Army Group North will take Leningrad and link up with the Finns, while the troops on the southern flank will make a breakthrough into the Caucasus region.

Taking into account the situation that had developed by the time the winter battle was over, with the available forces and means, as well as the existing transport conditions, this goal can be achieved only in stages.

Initially, it is necessary to concentrate all available forces to carry out the main operations in the southern sector in order to destroy the enemy west of the river. Don, in order to ensure the capture of the oil fields of the Caucasus and the passes through the Caucasus Range.

The final encirclement of Leningrad and the capture of the area of the river. The Neva can be carried out as soon as the situation in the area permits, or when sufficient forces are available in other theatres.

P. `Conducting operations A). The primary task of the ground forces and aviation

at the end of the thaw - to create preconditions for the implementation of the main operation.

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This requires streamlining and strengthening the situation on the entire Eastern Front and in the operational rear in order to attract as many forces as possible for the main operation, while at the same time maintaining the ability to repel any enemy offensive with minimal forces on the remaining sectors of the front.

Wherever, according to my instructions, it will be necessary to carry out offensive operations with limited objectives, it is necessary to ensure the readiness of the ground forces and aviation in order to achieve quick and decisive successes when they are introduced into battle. Only in this way will we be able, even before the start of the big spring offensive, to create confidence in our troops in victory, and for the enemy - the feeling that he is hopelessly inferior to us in strength.

B). The next tasks within this framework are: the cleaning of the Kerch Peninsula in the Crimea and the capture of Sevastopol. Aviation, and in the future, the navy will have to prepare these operations and paralyze enemy communications in the Black Sea and the Kerch Strait as much as possible.

In the southern sector of the front, it should be cut off and destroyed in the area of the river. Donets of the enemy, wedged on both sides of the river. Raisin. What kind of measures to correct the front line will still be required in the central and northern sectors of the Eastern Front, it will be possible to finally establish and decide only after the end of the current hostilities and the period of thaw. However, the necessary forces for this - as soon as the situation permits - must be obtained by reducing the front line.

IN). The main operation on the Eastern Front. Its purpose, as already emphasized, is to deliver a decisive blow to the Russian forces located south of Voronezh, to the west, and also to the north of the river in order to reach the Caucasus. Don, and destroy them. For reasons related to the movement of troops, this operation can be carried out as a series of successive, but coordinated and complementary strikes. [10therefore, their implementation should be synchronized from north to south in such a way as to ensure the maximum concentration of ground forces and especially aviation in decisive areas in each individual case.

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The experience of the war showed that the Russians were not too vulnerable to operational environments. [] For this reason, it is extremely important that, like the double battle of Vyazma-Bryansk, separate breakthroughs of the front should take the form of dense double encirclements (pincers).

A situation should be avoided when, as a result of too late closing of the pincers, the enemy has the opportunity to escape from destruction.

It should not be allowed that, due to the too rapid advance of tank and motorized formations, their connection with the infantry following them is disrupted, or that these formations lose the opportunity to support the infantry, which was attacked from the rear by the encircled Russian armies.

Thus, in addition to achieving the main operational goal, in each individual case, it is necessary under any conditions to ensure the destruction of the enemy.

The operation should begin with a general offensive and, if possible, a breakthrough from the area south of Orel in the direction of Voronezh. Of the two tank and motorized groupings intended for pincers, the northern one will be stronger than the southern one. The purpose of this breakthrough is to capture Voronezh itself. While part of the infantry divisions must immediately create a strong defensive front on the line from the starting point of the offensive from the Orel region in the direction of Voronezh, tank and motorized formations must continue the offensive south of Voronezh with their left flank on the river. Don in order to support the second breakthrough, carried out from the Kharkov region to the east. Here the main goal is not to push back the Russian front line, as such, but in cooperation with those who are making their way down the river. Don motorized formations to destroy the Russian forces.

The third offensive within the framework of this operation should be conducted in such a way that the troops moving down the river. Don, united in the Stalingrad region with those forces that are making their way to the east from the Taganrog-Artemovsk region through the river. Donets between the lower reaches of the Don and Voroshilovgrad. At the end of the operation, they must come into contact with the tank army advancing on Stalingrad.

If, however, in the course of these operations, especially as a result of mastering undamaged bridges, the prospect of creating

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Danish bridgeheads east or south of the river. Don, these opportunities should be used. In any case, one should try to reach Stalingrad itself, or at least expose it to the fire of our artillery, so that it ceases to serve as a military-industrial and transport center.

It is especially desirable to capture intact bridges in Rostov itself or to seize bridgeheads south of the river. Don for future operations.

In order to prevent the Russian forces north of the Don from crossing the river and going south, it is important that the right wing of our troops advancing east from Taganrog be reinforced with tanks and motorized infantry, which, if necessary, can be formed in the form of improvised formations.

As these attacks progress, we must not only secure the northeast flank, but also immediately establish positions along the Don. The creation of anti-tank fortifications is especially important here. These positions must be adapted from the outset for winter use. |

From the very beginning, units of our allies should be used to hold the ever-increasing Don Front. German troops will provide strong support between Orel and the river. Don, as well as along the coastal strip of Stalingrad. Otherwise, separate German divisions will be located behind the Don Front as a reserve.

The allied troops should be deployed as follows: in the very north, the Hungarians, then the Italians, and further to the southeast, the Romanians.

G). To achieve the goals of the operation, it is very important to ensure a rapid advance through the Don to the south, taking into account the conditions of the time.
of the year.

Adolf Hitler".

This document is a rather chaotic set of considerations, some of which are not relevant at all, there are many digressions and strategy is mixed with tactics. The goals of the operation are vague. At the same time, the enemy's forces, position and intentions are not affected at all (see Zeatyp, Au550-Tsegap Mag, p. 266).

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Briefly, the general idea of the directive was as follows:

take no active actions in the Moscow direction;

1). To carry out the main operation on the southern sector of the Soviet-German front "with the aim of a) destroying the enemy west of the river. Don and subsequently 6) capture the oil regions of the Caucasus and the passes through the Caucasus Range.

2. After the goals of paragraph 2 are achieved, one should "achieve the fall of Leningrad in the north and establish contact with the Finns by land, and make a breakthrough to the Caucasus region on the southern flank." These last tasks will be carried out in phases.

This strategic plan is neither realistic nor effective. If the goal of subparagraph (a) was more or less within reach, then the next one raises serious doubts. [Saying "the oil regions of the Caucasus", Hitler means Maykop and [rozny. For a rough orientation, the distance in a straight line from Kharkov, where the main German forces were stationed, to these deposits is, respectively, 690 and 900 km. In this case, the advancing troops will constantly move away from their sources of supply, having at their disposal only one line of the railway, which will still have to be converted to the German standard. But even this is not enough. Both of these deposits were secondary, therefore, even in the event of their loss, the USSR would not be faced with the need to capitulate. On the other hand, the Soviet troops would most certainly blow up the oil fields when they left, so the Germans would not be able to use them for a long time. The "breakthrough into the Caucasus region" mentioned in paragraph 3 means access to the oil fields in the region of Baku in Transcaucasia, but even [Hitler understood that the likelihood of this in the foreseeable future was low.

Here it is worth citing data on Soviet oil. In 1941, 38 million tons were mined, mainly in Baku, Rozny and Maikop, while the Baku deposits accounted for about 80% of the total production. There were also other deposits: on the Upper Volga and Kama, in the Urals, in the north near Ukhta. At the same time, throughout 1941, oil consumption by the Red Army, including

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tea aviation, amounted to less than 4.5 million tons (Seafon, Kissmann Voag, pp. 266-267).

In other words, the military and economic significance of the plan is by no means obvious. As usual, the main considerations of the Führer and the Nazis were political. It was necessary to show the German population that Germany was still capable of advancing and, in the long term, winning this war.

On the basis of Directive No. 41 of the OKH, the group and armies "South" (Bock) drew up the plan "Siegfried", soon renamed "Blau" (Blue). At the same time, they tried to be as careful and conservative as possible. The plan was to be carried out in four successive stages, in June the first three were detailed. The target of the first phase, "Blau I", was Voronezh. The Weichs task force, consisting of the 2nd, 4th Panzer and 2nd Hungarian armies, was supposed to move out of the concentration area south of Orel, force the river. Oskol and go east to Voronezh. At this time, the 40th Panzer Corps of the 6th Army was moving from Kharkov to the southeast. As a result, Soviet troops in front of Voronezh fall into the cauldron, where they must be finished off by infantry, mostly Hungarian. After that, the 4th Panzer Army takes Voronezh under the cover of the infantry of the 2nd Army. This creates cover from the flank and from the rear for the mobile German formations, which rush to the south along the right bank of the Don. The beginning of "Blau I" is in the middle of June, the end is in the middle of July.

After [0 days, the second phase, "Blau P", was planned, during which the German troops reach Millerovo and encircle the Soviet formations in the eastern part of the Donbass. The third phase, "Blau Sh", included the capture of Rostov, the bend of the Don and Stalingrad. Only after that the movement towards the Caucasus should have begun, but this phase, "Blau II", has not yet been detailed. The Germans expected that in the course of the implementation of the "Blau" plan, Soviet troops would repeatedly fall into the boilers with subsequent destruction or capture. It soon became clear that this assumption was far from reality. The division of the resources of the Wehrmacht into two parts did not bode well for him. At the same time, no calculations were made regarding the supply and replenishment of troops.

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SUMMER OFFENSIVE 1942

On the eve of the start of Operation Blue, an emergency occurred. On June 19, the head of the operations department of the headquarters of the 23rd Panzer Division, Major Reichel, in violation of the rules, took the orders and maps related to "Blau I" by plane. In bad weather conditions, the plane lost its orientation and was shot down by Soviet anti-aircraft gunners, one passenger and the pilot were burned to death. Major Reichel survived, but on the ground he was overtaken by infantrymen and killed in a shootout. All documents fell into the hands of the Soviet command. Timoshenko, or rather, his staff officers, recognized them as genuine, but Stalin did not believe them. He still believed that Moscow remained the main goal of the Germans. Moreover, since the end of May, paper activities were carried out in the zone of Army Group Center to imitate the preparation of an offensive against Moscow - the so-called. operation "Kremlin" (see LetKe apa Vayeg, p. 329). This disinformation appears to have served its purpose.

Hitler was furious at Reichel's carelessness, since a similar incident took place in Belgium in January 1940. The Führer court-martialed two generals and a colonel, but did not cancel Operation Blau, it only received the new code name "Braunschweig".

The operation began on June 28 with an attack by the Weichs group on Voronezh. Soviet resistance was in many places sluggish, in some places it did not exist at all. The fact of tactical surprise was evident. The Luftwaffe bombed Soviet positions without hindrance. It seemed that Kerch and Kharkov were repeating themselves, only on a larger scale. By July 4, Goth's 4th Panzer Army, having covered 150 km, reached the Don in many places and captured bridgeheads on the other side of the river. Her neighbors to the right and left also advanced, meeting little resistance. 150 km to the south, Paulus' 6th Army, which entered the field two days late because of the rains, also experienced no difficulties. On July 6, the Germans entered Voronezh without firing a shot. The capture of 88 thousand prisoners and 1000 tanks was modest by the standards of the forty-first year.

The rapid retreat of the Red Army troops everywhere, especially in the zone of the 6th Paulus Army, was a complete surprise. Hitler at this point looked at the position of the optimist

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Czech. "Russian kaput," he declared to Halder (Hundred, p. 168). Soviet official sources are very muffled and vague about the strategic retreat. Say, the Stavka appointed him to avoid encirclement. In any case, this does not apply to the Bryansk Front of Golikov, who defended Voronezh, the order addressed to him was to stand and not let him go. Therefore, one can only talk about the deliberate withdrawal of the troops of the Southwestern Front (Tymoshenko) and the Southern Front (Malinovsky), although the document that sanctioned this is never named. Erikson (Tie goa4 no. 0 Zaitrta, p. 360) considers this retreat to be the merit of Vasilevsky, who wanted to avoid catastrophic encirclements, such as those that were at Kiev and Vyazma in 1941.

Initial optimism on the German side soon evaporated. On July 8, Bock wrote to Halder: "In my opinion, Operation Blue P is a dead business." The field marshal feared that no one would fall into the planned double encirclement. Meanwhile, Hitler and Halder ordered the Blau P to begin on July 9, two weeks ahead of schedule. At the same time, Army Group South was divided into two: Group A, led by Field Marshal List, who was tasked with capturing Stalingrad and the subsequent conquest of the Caucasus, and Group B (Bock), which was supposed to cover List's flank.

Further events went like an operetta. According to the plan, Paulus and Goth were supposed to link up at Vysochanovka, but by this time the 6th Army had gone far ahead. According to the new orders, Hoth was now to meet up with Kleist's 1st Panzer Army east of Millerov, but this also did not happen, because the 4th Panzer Army was stuck due to interruptions in the supply of fuel. On July 1, Kleist received a new order—to advance between Millerovo and Kamensky. All these misunderstandings occurred because the enemy did not want to play according to the German plans. The three armies united only on July 15 near Millerovo, but by that time the bulk of the Soviet troops were able to avoid encirclement. Only 40,000 were taken prisoner, which, in Hitler's opinion, represented a major setback. The scapegoat was Bock, who [on the 7th "left" his post. Weichs replaced him. The German offensive continued anyway, on July 23 they entered Rostov.

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Directive No. 45

Since July 16, Hitler has been at his new headquarters "Werwolf" in Vinnitsa, where Halder had moved earlier. It is difficult to say whether the 40-degree Ukrainian heat influenced the decisions of the Fuhrer, but the plans for the summer campaign were radically shaken up. Directive No. 45 followed on July 23. The Blau Sh phase was cancelled. Instead, two operations were planned - "Edelweiss" (group A) and "Gray Heron" (group B). The goals of the first were to seize the eastern coast of the Black Sea and simultaneously take possession of the oil fields in Maykop and Grozny, and then in Baku. Group B was to capture the bend of the Don, take Stalingrad and move to Astrakhan. Previously, these were the goals of Blau Sh, and only after that could the campaign to the Caucasus begin. Now two sets of enormous tasks had to be carried out simultaneously and independently of each other. There was even less realism in this directive than in Directive No. 41. The Fuhrer's wild imagination, his impatience, his desire to pursue all available goals at the same time - all these were signs of a dangerous instability that required professional help. Of course, no one in the leadership of the Wehrmacht could recommend this, although many thought so.

Of the two hastily composed operations, Edelweiss was the main one. [Ruppe A, consisting of four armies, was to cross the Don over a wide area from the Sea of Azov to bridgeheads east of Konstantinovka and Tsymlyanskaya. After destroying the Soviet forces south and southeast of Rostov by means of a series of boilers, they then invade the Caucasus. The right wing, the 17th Army of Ruoff and the 3rd Romanian Dumitrescu, captures the entire eastern coast of the Black Sea: first Anapa and Novorossiysk, then, crossing the spurs of the Caucasus Range, Tuapse and Sukhumi, and later Batumi. In time, they will be joined by the [I army of Manstein, which Hitler ordered to be transferred from the Crimea to the Taman Peninsula. Two tank armies, the I and the 4th, at that time take possession of the North Caucasus, including the oil fields in Maykop and Gozny, after which along the Military Ossetian and Military Georgian roads through the only passes suitable for motor vehicles, descend into Transcaucasia and rush

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to Baku. On July 13, the 4th Panzer Army of Hoth was given to Army Group A in order to ensure the capture of the crossings on the Lower Don. It was a decision that Hitler soon regretted. It turned out that Kleist did not need this help, but Goth actually got stuck in the tail of the 1st Panzer Army, especially since he almost immediately began to have serious shortages of fuel.

Hitler's self-confidence at this time reached its climax. He not only split his forces, but at the same time decided to transfer the "Grossdeutschland" division to the Western Front. Three days later, it was also decided to send only two divisions to the Caucasus | 1st army of seven; they landed only on 2 September. Group A and Group B were to move in diverging directions at right angles: one to the south, the other to the northeast; they were separated by the Kalmyk steppe, where there was only one motorized division, which was to control the territory of about 100 thousand square kilometers.

It was a grandiose and absolutely fantastic plan. With a distance from Rostov to Baku of more than 1,000 km, after achieving the goals of the campaign, the Wehrmacht would have to hold a front of 4,000 km. The Führer did not for a moment think whether he had the strength for such an undertaking.

The tasks of Army Group B looked more modest at first. The 6th Army was to go to Stalingrad, capture the city and block the area between the Don and Volga rivers. The remaining formations - the 2nd Army, the 2nd Hungarian Army and the 8th Italian Army - were supposed to cover the left flank and rear of the Paulus army.

Order No. 227

Five days after Hitler committed the mortal sin of splitting his forces with Directive No. 45, Stalin issued the infamous Order No. 227 on July 28. It begins with some analysis of the situation at the front:

"The enemy is throwing more and more forces to the front and, regardless of heavy losses for him, climbs forward, breaks into the depths of the Soviet Union, seizes new areas, devastates and devastates our cities and villages, rapes, robs and kills the Soviet Union. Russian population. The fighting is going on in the Voronezh region, on the Don, in the south at the gates of the North Caucasus. The German invaders are rushing to the Sta

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Lingrad, to the Volga and want to capture the Kuban, the North Caucasus with their oil and grain wealth at any cost. The enemy has already captured Voroshilovgrad, Starobelsk, Rossosh, Kupyansk, Valuiki, Novochoerkassk, Rostov-on-Don, half of Voronezh. Part of the troops of the Southern Front, following the alarmists, left Rostov and Novochoerkassk without serious resistance and without an order from Moscow, covering their banners with disgrace.

Even if we accept that earlier the Soviet leader approved the strategic retreat, then in this order he returns to the model of the forty-first year:

<... it's time to end the retreat. No step back! This should be our main call now."

It is easy to see that at this difficult moment, Stalin cannot do without lies: German losses at this time are small, and Voronezh has already been surrendered. Reasons for failure? First of all, "stupid people", to which he does not consider himself:

"Some stupid people at the front comfort themselves with the talk that we can continue to retreat to the east, since we have a lot of territory, a lot of land, a lot of population, and that we will always have an abundance of grain. By this they want to justify their shameful behavior at the fronts. But such talk is completely false and deceitful, beneficial only to our enemies.

The modern reader might think that the language and logic here allude to a caricature, a parody, perhaps a Soviet version of the sketch from Mot Ruyop's Nitv Słrsi\$, but no, this is a genuine official document. Every schoolchild in Russia knows the second reason named by Stalin ("The country was big, only there is no order"), but the leader points to it anyway:

"What are we missing? There is a lack of order and discipline in companies, regiments, divisions, tank units, air squadrons. This is now our main shortcoming. We must establish the strictest order and iron discipline in our army,

if we want to save the situation and defend our Motherland.”

The question may arise: how did it happen that discipline suddenly collapsed in the army, which was constantly kept on a short leash, which was skinned, cleaned and subjected to other types of paternal care? Might be worth asking

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from those to whom the people before the war entrusted this glorious army - with TT. Stalin, Molotov, Timoshenko, Mekhlis, Shchadenko and others? Fortunately for the Bolsheviks, the Russian people did not ask such questions, for which I.V. Stalin loved him ardently and tenderly until the end of his days.

The final part of the document is Stalin's contribution to the criminal code. First, military courts for those who retreat without an order - from the commander down. It is interesting that the commanders of fronts and above are not included in this category: perhaps Stalin did not want to fall under the influence of his own order under a hot hand. Secondly, penal battalions (800 men each) for “medium and senior commanders and relevant political workers of all branches of the armed forces who are guilty of violating discipline due to cowardice or instability”; such to create within each front from one to three. In fact, Stalin set a minimum quota for each front - 800 cowards and alarmists. Knowing the Soviet reality of that time, it is impossible to assume that someone would dare to report to the Headquarters: we have few cowards and there are only 200 people in the penal battalion. It was easier and safer to fulfill the norm set by the beloved leader. For “ordinary soldiers and junior commanders guilty of violating discipline due to cowardice or instability,” the People's Commissar provided for penal companies. Here the norm is as follows: from 5 to 10 in each army, 150-200 people in each. And finally, detachments:

“... to form within the army 3-5 well-armed barrage detachments (200 people each, put them in the immediate rear of unstable divisions and oblige them, in case of panic and disorderly withdrawal of parts of the division, to shoot at place of alarmists and cowards and thereby help honest soldiers of the divisions to fulfill their duty to the Motherland.

The executions on the spot had patriotic overtones and provided an opportunity for honest Soviet people to do their duty. Thanks to Order No. 227, these latter received the freedom of choice: a German bullet in the forehead or a KGB bullet in the back of the head. Attention is drawn to the wording about arming detachments. They consisted of Chekists and were undoubtedly better armed than the Red Army soldiers whom they drove to their deaths. They also fed better.

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It is worth noting that the barrage detachments were established as early as June 27, 1941 to detain deserters and “every suspicious element that had penetrated the front line.” After order No. 227, another 193 army detachments were formed. They were abolished on October 29, 1944. I will not dwell on their statistics, since reliable sources are not yet available. Some modern authors argue that these Chekist formations and Order No. 227 saved the Motherland in forty-two. I will not undertake to argue with such notorious patriots.

The principle of “not a step back” deprived the command of units and formations of the opportunity to conduct a mobile defense. There were many cases when, after July 28, you had to defend where you were caught by this order, even if there was a water barrier behind your back.

Penal units existed until the end of the war. In 1942-1943. more than 155,000 criminals passed through penal companies, apart from ordinary Red Army soldiers and junior commanders. This fit well with the Stalinist notion that most Soviet people were criminals by nature, only some had already been caught, while others had not yet. In general, order No. 227 was a continuation of the Bolshevik terror against the Red Army. The army was forced to pay for the sins, stupidities and crimes of power.

CAUCASUS

Operation Edelweiss began on July 26. Rostov fell two days earlier. The thin barriers of the Soviet troops were immediately broken through, and in many places this was not even the case. For the first three weeks, for most formations, the offensive was more like an exercise, where it was necessary to reach certain points on the map. The main complaints at this time were the heat, which reached 37 degrees Celsius. In the first week, the 17th Army captured Krasnodar. On the Soviet side, another reorganization was taking place at that time. The remnants of the Southern Front of Malinovsky were renamed the North Caucasian Front under the command of Budyonny, he was also given hastily assembled additional and poorly trained

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new troops. The Germans were advancing quickly anyway. [On August 0 Maykop was in their hands. True, it was out of the question to immediately use local oil. As they left, the Soviet troops blew up and burned everything they could, and in addition filled the wells with concrete.

Very soon it became clear that the successes of the Germans in the Stalingrad direction were more than modest. | In August, Hitler yielded to Halder's arguments and agreed to transfer Hoth's 4th Panzer Army to Group B, later the Romanian 3rd Army was sent there. The forces of group A were melting before our eyes. Until recently, it had four armies with the prospect of getting a fifth, now there are two left. The 1st Panzer Army of Kleist began the operation greatly weakened after the battle near Kharkov. Its mechanized units had only 40% of the regular number of vehicles, by July 16 this figure had fallen to 30%. Each tank division had only one tank battalion. After 10 days, the eight mechanized divisions of Group A had only 54 tanks each (see Ch. 1an{2 anna Noise, pp. 119-120). Field Marshal List at first looked to the future with cautious optimism: “A quick advance to the southeast with sufficient mobile forces will not meet serious resistance until Baku itself” (Sto, p. 229). It wasn't there!

By the end of August, the German position in the Caucasus looked like a huge ledge from the Lower Don through the Kuban to the mountain range. Much progress was made in the center of the salient, but the advance stalled on the Black Sea coast. The city of Novorossiysk, after heavy fighting, was in German hands, but Soviet troops held one side of the bay. All attempts to break through the mountain passes to Tuapse and Sukhumi ended in failure, although the Germans were only 30 km from each of them, if you look at the map. Hitler insisted that List make his way to the Black Sea coast - to Batumi and further to the Turkish border. With this approach, the troops of group A would be on both sides of the Main Caucasian Range. List never agreed to such a split of his forces, fearing that he would not be able to provide them with supplies. Although the 49th mountain corps captured the Klukhorsky and Sancharsky passes, List still did not want to go to Sukhumi without cover from the west. On August 31, he arrived in Vinnitsa. The Fuhrer received him kindly, but inside he was seething. On 6 September List told the OKH that he could not

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attack, the next day he convinced Jodl, who had come to him, of this. When he reported this to Hitler, the reaction was the most furious. Jodl was no longer invited to the Fuehrer's dinner table. On September 9, Hitler dismissed List and declared himself commander of Group A, in which capacity he remained until the second half of November, when Kleist was appointed. On September 24, Halder's turn came, replaced by the younger and less well-known Zeidler.

The focus of the German offensive shifted to the east - to the Terek. Progress became extremely slow. Often there was not enough fuel. For this reason, the mobile units advancing on [rozny] approached Mozdok on August 9, but then stood there for several weeks. There were cases when gasoline was delivered by air or by camel. The situation of the summer and autumn of 1941 was repeated, when the rapid advances stopped due to interruptions in supply.

The fighting at the main passes of the Caucasus crossed out all the hopes of the German command. Tyulenev's Transcaucasian Front resisted with all its might. Perhaps the presence as a representative of the Headquarters of Beria, who brought a team of Chekists with him, played some role. On November 1, one tank division of the Kleist army was 15 km from Ordzhonikidze, the next day - seven. The fighting became more and more stubborn, often turning into hand-to-hand combat. On November 3, the Germans approached the city at 2 km. In the next two days, the score went to the meters. On the 6th, a counterattack by the Soviet infantry and "thirty-fours" threw the exhausted Germans back. Ordzhonikidze resisted. Grozny remained out of reach of the German troops.

STALINGRAD

On July 17, 1942, at the turn of the Chir River, the advanced units of Paulus came into contact with the troops of the 62nd Army, Major General V.Ya. Kolpakchi. This date is usually considered the beginning of the Battle of Stalingrad.

In my mind, Stalingrad is a monument to madness, a reminder of what two degenerates put at the head of huge modern armies can do. The tenacity of leaders on both sides is not least due to

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because they are both religious fanatics. Because both Bolshevism and National Socialism are religions, albeit godless ones. Dogma and ideology dominate them. Hence the passion for symbols and propaganda.

In the summer of 1942, as a result of massive air and artillery bombardments, the city of Stalingrad was virtually wiped off the face of the earth. Stubborn battles, costing many thousands of human lives, went for the mastery of the ruins. At the end of September, Hitler assured his listeners at a mass rally that Stalingrad would be taken. He canceled the offensive of Hoth's 4th Panzer Army on Astrakhan and redirected its best division to the aid of Paulus's 6th Army. (71etKe-1, p. 458). Stalin did not make public statements, but all his generals knew that he would not surrender "his city".

The grandiose battle between the Volga and Don rivers is often called a turning point in the course of the war. This is only partly true. [The German defeat was complete and decisive. However, the course of the war immediately after the Battle of Stalingrad showed that the Soviet command rushed to the conclusion that the strategic initiative had passed into its hands. This happened only after the Battle of Kursk.

Let us return, however, to the events of 1942. On July 12, by directive of the Stavka, the Stalingrad Front was formed under the command of Timoshenko. On July 22, General Gordov became commander of the front.

In a clash on July 17 on the Chir River, the 62nd Army retreated, but was soon able to take up defensive positions and held off the Germans for several days. On July 23, Paulus, having received reinforcements, broke through the Soviet defenses, creating a threat to all the troops stationed in the bend of the Don. Vasilevsky, who arrived there as a representative of the Stavka, threw under the feet of the advancing Germans the 1st and 4th tank armies from the reserve, which had not yet been finally formed. Thus, the encirclement of the 62nd Army was torn apart at the cost of heavy human losses, as well as the loss of more than 200 tanks. Paulus these days captured Nizhne-Chirskaya, but failed to develop success. The absence of tanks, which were given to List in the North Caucasus direction, had an effect. There was a hitch in the German advance. On July 31, Hitler agreed to turn Hoth's 4th Panzer Army towards Stalingrad with the task of attacking the city from the south. Her progress was slow. There were interruptions with

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delivery of fuel, difficult terrain and the resistance of the 57th Army. [0 August Goth also had to stop. The Germans began to reorganize, preparing an attack on Stalingrad along two converging directions.

At this time, the Soviet side was undergoing its own reorganization. On August, the Stalingrad front was divided into two, justifying this decision by the fact that the front line reached 800 km. Yeremenko, who had not yet fully recovered from a wound in his leg, was placed at the head of the new South-Eastern Front, Khrushchev was appointed a member of the Military Council; Gordov remained on the Stalingrad front. It soon became clear that this shuffling only made matters worse. In order not to give a full reverse, they resorted to bureaucratic wisdom. [August 3, the Stalingrad Front was subordinated to the South-Eastern, i.e. Eremenko, and on August 28 both fronts were fully united under the name Stalingrad.

On August 19, Paulus issued a detailed order for an attack on Stalingrad with the task of completely capturing the city by the 25th. The operation began on Sunday the 23rd at 04.30. Hube's group broke through the Soviet defenses on the move. On this day and on the night of August 24, German aviation dealt a monstrous blow to Stalingrad - 2,600 sorties. The bombardment was aimed at residential areas of the city and at the administrative center. Half of the bomb load was incendiary bombs. The wooden houses that made up most of the buildings in Stalingrad burned to the ground; only the brick ovens remained standing. It was an openly terrorist raid, aimed at killing as many civilians as possible and instilling fear in the defenders of the city. The Germans, according to them, shot down 91 Soviet aircraft, losing only 3 of their own. With 37-degree heat, the city turned into a fiery hell. It actually ceased to exist, turned into a string of ruins stretched for 40 km along the Volga. No one knows exactly how many victims were among the 600 thousand inhabitants of the city. The largest figure is 180 thousand, Hiroshima and Nagasaki in one day.

Shortly before midnight, Paulus received a report from Hube at his command post in Osinovskaya:

at 18.35 the first German unit, the 79th Panzergrenadier (motorized) Regiment, reached the Volga.

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And an hour had not passed when Hitler sent Hube a personal order from Vinnitsa:

16th Panzer Division to hold positions under any circumstances.

It was easier said than done. Stalin received news of the enemy's withdrawal to the Volga by radio - there was no wire connection between Stalingrad and Headquarters. As soon as it was restored early in the morning of August 24, Vasilevsky, Malenkov and Eremenko received a dispatch from the leader of the Soviet people (Vasilevsky, pp. 216-217):

"The enemy broke through the front with insignificant forces. You have enough strength to destroy the enemy who has broken through. Gather aircraft from both fronts and attack the enemy that has broken through. Mobilize the armored trains and send them on the circular railway of Stalingrad. Use smoke in abundance to intimidate the enemy. Fight with the enemy not only during the day, but also at night. Use artillery and SS forces to the fullest... The most important thing is not to panic, not to be afraid of an impudent enemy and to remain confident in our success."

The means that Stalin prescribes to stop the impudent enemy are clearly taken from the arsenal of the Civil War - armored trains alone are worth something. Abundant smoke is also nothing. But these are all trifles. The main thing is that both dictators, without saying a word, decided not to feel sorry for their soldiers near Stalingrad. A massive massacre was sanctioned on both sides.

In the central sector, the successes of the Germans were much more modest. It took them seven days to push the Soviet troops back 30 km to Karpovka. Goth, advancing from the southwest, was to link up with the right flank of Paulus in order to cover the 62nd and 64th armies. However, Kempf's 48th Panzer Corps could not break through the Soviet defenses. Meanwhile, Eremenko managed to turn Stalingrad, or rather, what was left of it, into a fortress in a few days. 50,000 volunteers joined the people's militia, 75,000 residents were assigned to the 62nd Army, 3,000 women were called up as nurses and radio operators, 7,000 teenagers aged from [3 to 16 years old] received weapons and were included in combat units.

In the center of the defense was the 62nd Army, commanded by General Vasily Chuikov. Suddenly this before that

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his little-known general turned out to be at the level of the inhuman task assigned to him. Chuikov quite early understood what the German superiority consisted of: precisely in the clear interaction of infantry, artillery and aviation. To this he countered with the effective but extremely costly tactic of staying as close as possible to the enemy all the time, holding him in his arms so that he could not use his superior firepower. The Soviet units sent forward small groups of infantrymen and sappers, who were separated from the Germans by the width of the street, and often by the wall inside the building. The cost of this proximity was an exceptionally high casualty rate. At night, boats and barges brought fresh reinforcements from the left, eastern bank of the Volga, which Chuikov immediately threw into the crucible of battle. They didn't take long. For example, Rodimtsev's 187th Rifle Division fought exceptionally stubbornly, losing 90% of its personnel in three days; as a reward for her steadfastness, she was made a guard. New units arrived to replace the dead: Stalin, as we know, had huge reserves.

At this point, the reader is waiting, perhaps, for a conversation about heroism, but this is not my topic. Too often the forced heroism of soldiers and officers of the first line was used by the command to cover up their stupidity and incompetence. Remember the famous and, alas, senseless onslaught of the British cavalry at Balaklava on October 25, 1854, sung in Alfred Tennyson's ballad "The Charge of the Light Brigade":

No one hesitated, no one turned around, No one returned alive from the attack.

The brave six hundred horsemen of the ballad died because of an incorrectly transmitted order, which none of the officers dared to question. A hundred years later, Epsusior a VSchangisa will write (Digssiptea, p. 103):

"The Crimean War must be regarded as the worst campaign in British history."

Let us return, however, to Stalingrad. The Germans advanced with desperate stubbornness and gradually, extremely slowly, pushed the Soviet troops to the Volga. This stupid straightforward tactic was also costly. By the end of September, the Soviet positions had turned into isolated bridgeheads. The front passed in 200 m of the Volga.

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OPERATION "URANUS"

The planning of this operation coincided with changes in Berlin. At the end of September, Hitler replaced the Chief of the General Staff, appointing, to this post, General Kurt Zeidler.

On October 26, Paulus in his circle declared with confidence that he would completely take over Stalingrad by November 10. It must be said that in the autumn of 1942, as a commander, he did not show his best side. There were several reasons for this. First of all, his combat and command experience was modest. Paulus's entire career was spent on staff work; the largest unit he commanded was a regiment, and even then in peacetime. He received the 6th Army due to a combination of circumstances. In the summer of 1941 it was commanded by Field Marshal von Rathenau, one of the few convinced Nazis on the top floor of the Wehrmacht. In the fall, Hitler, furious at the loss of Rostov, put him in charge of Army Group South. In his place, Rathenau recommended Paulus, who was his chief of staff in 1940.

Paulus, an intelligent and educated general, was at that time Chief Quartermaster T, actually Deputy Chief of the General Staff. In his new post, his lack of command skills put him in a difficult position. Paulus clearly lacked decisiveness. He often assigned tasks to subordinates in a rather vague manner, as in a staff game.

In a strange way, this erudite staff officer had a clear view of the strategic and operational dangers that threatened his army. Chained to Stalingrad for almost three months, the 6th Army, with its stretched communications and weak flanks, was a classic target for encirclement. However, Paulus did not foresee such a possibility, he never mentioned it in his conversations with Hitler.

The Fuhrer hoped that the energetic Zeitler, nicknamed "Thunderball", would be more comfortable in communication. The new Chief of the General Staff began with a detailed report laden with statistics. His conclusions were not at all what Hitler expected (Taggart, p. 89):

"As a result of the summer campaign, we have captured more territory than we can hold with available troops, this smells of a disaster.

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The most dangerous sector of the Eastern Front is located between Army Group Center and Stalingrad. The density of troops here is insufficient, and these troops themselves, Romanians, Italians and Hungarians, are distinguished by low reliability and combat effectiveness. The same picture south of Stalingrad.

The supply of the Eastern Front with people, equipment, weapons and ammunition does not cover the losses. This creates a huge danger.

The training of Russian troops and the quality of command are higher today than in [1941]. We must be careful."

The Fuhrer listened to the report without interrupting Zeitler, then said with a smile: "You are too pessimistic. There were worse periods on the Eastern Front, but we survived." Everything remains the same.

Zeitler constantly reminded the Fuhrer that the sector of the front between Voronezh and Stalingrad was in a threatened position, and suggested possible solutions: leave Stalingrad and withdraw beyond the Don, or prepare for such a withdrawal in the event of a Russian offensive. Another suggestion was to replace unreliable divisions on the flanks of the Stalingrad group with German divisions. Hungarians and Romanians showed little zeal to fight against the Soviet troops, they were more inclined to fight each other, remembering the events after the First World War, when the Romanians invaded Hungary. For this reason, they could not be placed next to each other. Hitler stood his ground. The only thing Zeitler could do was to place several German anti-tank battalions in the areas of the Romanian divisions.

At this time, the situation at the front began to take shape in favor of the Soviet side. With the beginning of autumn, the Germans actually went on the defensive along the entire front, although in some areas, as in the Tuapse region, they were still taking offensive actions. They also continued their attacks at Stalingrad, but their intensity decreased, with fewer troops involved. It was evident that the Germans were tired and were preparing to sit out the winter.

The Soviet command was tempted to go on the offensive. This is how the idea of Operation Uranus was born. The details of its development are still not quite clear, in particular, who owns the original idea, other layers

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you who said "e" first. I will therefore confine myself to what is known. The idea of the operation arose early. Volkogonov says:

"But even when the fate of Stalingrad still hung in the balance, A.M. Vasilevsky instructed a group of General Staff officers consisting of A.A. Gyzlova, S.I. Teteshkina, N.I. Voikov and others to work out in deep secrecy a variant of coverage from the north and south of a far-reaching enemy strike group. A map has been preserved, on which the first contours of the future famous operation performed by N.I. Boykov.

The phonetic proximity of the names Voikov-Boikov is striking. It seems that this is one person - the head of the direction to the Stalingrad Front, Colonel I.I. Bokov (as Shtemenko defines his position). But sometimes it is given as N.I. Boikov or Voikov.

On September 13, Commissar of the General Staff F.E. Bokov (another candidate for confusion), replacing Vasilevsky, who had left for the front, reported to Stalin the plan of the operation: to attack the weak Romanian forces on the flanks of Paulus. In mid-October, the operation began to take concrete shape.

The plan of operation "Uranus" provided for the complete encirclement of the German Stalingrad group. To this end, the Southwestern Front of Vatutin was supposed to break through the German defenses north of Stalingrad in the sector of the 8th Italian and 3rd

Romanian armies and move southeast. The left wing of Yeremenko's Stalingrad Front will advance towards him in the north-western direction.

During these months, Stalin had:

September 2

8 [Voilevsky, Bokov Vasilevsky, Bokov, Romanenko Vasilevsky, Bokov, Zhukov (2) Vasilevsky, Bokov, Zhukov

,2 6) 7 6)

October 5 [Vasilevsky Bokov, Zhukyuv | n [Howl bkw W

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November

oj [December

After Stalingrad, the General Staff avoided even the word "encirclement", mindful of Stalin's negative perception of the experience of fighting Paulus' encircled army. The German troops demonstrated there and in other places (Demyansk, Kholm, Gorshechnoe) high stamina and combat skills in very difficult conditions of struggle. The encircled troops did not give up, but fought energetic battles.

..At the end of November, he tried to get Hitler's permission for the 6th Army to make an attempt to get out of the encirclement. At a meeting attended by several people, including Keitel and Jodl, Zeidler used all his eloquence to prove the necessity of such an operation. This impressed the Führer, who asked Keitel and Jodl for advice. Unlike Jodl, who gave a vague answer, Keitel was unequivocal in his opposition to the breakthrough of the 6th Army from Stalingrad. This city is a symbol and must be kept. The Volga, Russia's main economic artery, must remain blocked. In fact, he repeated the arguments previously expressed by Hitler himself. Having received such support, Hitler refused to approve Zeidler's plan (Egeufayu von Goppevowen, pp. 110-111).

OPERATION MARS

When, in the spring of 1942, the prospects for war were assessed at Headquarters, they repeatedly repeated that the troops of Army Group Center were still 100-200 kilometers from Moscow. From this it followed that the situation of the 41st could be repeated. The General Staff (Shaposhnikov) believed that in the spring of 1942 the main German attack would be on the Bryansk-Kursk sector in the direction of

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Rzhev and further to Vladimir and Penza to cover Moscow from the south and southeast. Stalin was inclined to believe this forecast. Zhukov proposed, without exchanging for private operations, to defeat the Vyazma-Rzhev group of Germans in the first place with the forces of the Western and Kalinin fronts, aviation of the RGK and air defense of Moscow. This is how the idea of Operation Mars was born.

The events in the spring and summer of 1942 did not go at all according to the scenario [of the General Staff, but at Headquarters they continued to regard the Moscow direction as the main one. As for the commander of the Western Front, Zhukov, he still dreamed of defeating Army Group Center - something he had not been able to do before. In August, the troops of two fronts, the Western and Kalinin, fiercely attacked the Germans in the Rzhev region for three days; they held out, but at the cost of heavy losses. It was a kind of dress rehearsal for Mars, although the operation itself (sometimes referred to as Rzhev-Sychevskaya) had not yet been approved.

On September 26, Stalin agreed in principle to the conduct of two major operations in the autumn of 1942 - "Uranus" in the region of Stalingrad and "Mars" in the region of Rzhev and Vyazma. Responsible for them were, respectively, Vasilevsky and Zhukov. At the end of August, the latter handed over the Western Front to Konev, who was replaced by M.A. on the Kalinin Front. Purkaev. Now Zhukov could focus on the implementation of his cherished plan.

Initially, Operation Mars was to begin on October 12 with the forces of the Western and Kalinin fronts. Soon this date was moved to October 26 due to bad weather. Zhukov, in his memoirs, speaks contemptuously of the Germans when they cite the weather as a negative factor near Moscow. Here, of course, the conversation was about our own army (Glantz, David. Zhukov's biggest defeat. The catastrophe of the Red Army in the operation "Mars" in 1942 - M.: Ast, 2006. S. 382-383).

In general, according to recently published information about the losses of the Soviet troops, in 1942 the Western and Kalinin fronts lost 606 17] people killed and missing and 1,172,948 wounded. If we subtract the losses in the previous Rzhev-Vyazemskaya (January-April) and Rzhev-Sychevskaya (August) operations, as well as the average combat losses for the remaining period of relative calm, we get that in

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During Operation Mars, about 100,000 people were killed and missing, and about 235,000 were wounded (for casualties by type of service, see the Appendices).

These figures correspond exactly to the German estimates. Moreover, these same losses make it possible to assign Operation Mars the dubious title of one of the most expensive defeats of the Soviet Army during the war. In other words, in Operation Mars, which lasted less than a month, Zhukov lost 335,000 men, while Vasilevsky won a strategic victory at Stalingrad in two and a half months, losing only 485,000 men. In addition, Vasilevsky's losses include not only the losses of the Uranus operation, but also the Little Saturn operation, the Kotelnikovskaya operation and the operation to reduce

the number of encircled German troops in Stalingrad. This bloodshed was repeated almost exactly by Zhukov in April and May 1945, when the 1st Belorussian Front under his command lost 37,610 killed and missing and 141,880 wounded during the Berlin operation. These losses amounted to more than half of the total losses for the three Soviet fronts involved in the operation.

According to the latest German comprehensive calculations, the combat losses of the Russians were as follows:

200 000

[Deserters 279 353 264 78

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In 1999, Glantz, in his book "Zhukov's Main Defeat" ("TVergea{ez{ DpiKou d@ea("), paying tribute to Marshal Zhukov, a skillful but ruthless operator, spoke about the epic failure of the Red Army in operation "Mars" near Moscow, carried out simultaneously with the successful "Saturn" - the Stalingrad offensive operation. But it took Glantz time to realize that Mars was just a costly demonstration—albeit too costly: about a hundred thousand dead and over two hundred and thirty-five thousand wounded. But the Wehrmacht, shackled by this pressure, could not transfer anything to help Paulus. You can say so, but that was not Zhukov's goal.

1943

RING, STAR AND RAPIDITY OF VICTORY

Operation "Ring" to destroy the 6th Army began on January 10, and on February 2, the remnants of Paulus' troops capitulated. In Stalingrad, where 99% of the buildings were destroyed, 91,000 Germans and Romanians surrendered, including 24 generals and 2,500 officers. Among the prisoners of war, typhus raged, which quickly mowed down one third - 34 thousand people. The rest were led on foot to Saratov, many found their death along the way. The security of the prisoners on the march was minimal. German columns were often attacked by other soldiers or civilians with weapons. The target of the attack was watches and other remnants of personal property. Those who fell behind were never seen again. The survivors were sent east by rail, distributed among 20 camps. Only half of those loaded reached their destinations. By May 1943, there were only 15,000 prisoners on the lists; by the end of the war, 5,000. Of this last number, 2,000 were able to return to Germany only in 1955. Chancellor Adenauer literally scratched them out of Khrushchev during his visit to the Soviet Union.

The total irretrievable losses of the Germans in the Battle of Stalingrad amounted to 94 | thousand people. The distribution is: 24| thousand killed were soldiers and officers of the 6th army, 300 thousand belonged to the 4th tank army of the Germans, the 3rd and 4th Romanian armies, the 8th Italian and 2nd Hungarian (Taggap, p. 228-230).

Soviet losses were hidden for a long time, they were published only in the 90s. They didn't pull in vain, the figure was huge - see "Vulture secret NOST ...", p. 178-182, 369-370).

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Operation Participated Total losses Sanitary Irretrievable

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Stalingrad - 17.07 - 323 856,

547000 [643842]319 986 OR 11/18/42

yarn 59.2%

Stalingrad - 154 885,

nastu- 19.11.42 | 143 500 | 485 777 | 330 892 OR 2.02.43

handmade 13.5%

[All | [1690500 [1 129619 [650 878 [483741 | |

Are the Soviet irretrievable losses lower than the German ones? Plus civilian casualties. The total number of irretrievable losses of the civilian population during the Battle of Stalingrad is at least 185,232 people.

Pavlenko recalls (p. 60):

"Once, when I was present at a conversation with Voronov on Frunzenskaya Embankment, Marshal of the Soviet Union K.K. Rokossovsky. With the advent of Rokossovsky, the main topic of conversation was, of course, Operation Ring. It was then that I learned a lot of interesting details. For example, this one: A.I. Eremenko considered this operation not only unnecessary, but also harmful, since it cost tens of thousands of lives of Soviet soldiers in vain. In his opinion, after the failure of Kotelnikov's attempts to unblock the encircled enemy troops, it was necessary to abandon the operation "Ring" altogether. Under those conditions, it was expedient to leave small barriers against the encircled troops, and the main forces of the Don Front had to be directed towards Kharkov and Kursk. The encircled enemy grouping, experiencing an acute shortage of food, ammunition and fuel, would have surrendered in one or two weeks and without any blows from the Red Army. Rokossovsky and Voronov did not deny such a variant of the actions of the troops, but emphasized that for further

conducting offensive operations, it was extremely important to free the Stalingrad railway junction from enemy troops as soon as possible.

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Despite Rokossovsky and Eremenko's negative attitude towards the "Ring", they had to develop a plan of operation: Vasilevsky, a representative of the Headquarters, who led the actions of three fronts, writes (p. 243):

"And on the night of December 5, together with K.K. Rokossovsky, after consulting with A.I. Eremenko, we began to develop a new plan for the liquidation of the encircled troops of Paulus. I must say that on the question of further actions of the Soviet troops in the area of Stalingrad, a number of proposals were submitted to the Headquarters. As I learned, according to one of them, we had to stop actions to eliminate the besieged army of Paulus, leave only security troops around it, since it supposedly did not pose a threat, was like a "hare on a leash", and all our main troops immediately move to Rostov-on-Don in order to cut off the escape routes of the fascist troops from the North Caucasus. This, according to the authors of the proposal, would bring us great benefits, forming a second large "boiler" in the North Caucasus for the enemy troops stationed there.

I.V. Stalin supported my negative attitude to this proposal. The Supreme High Command, on the basis of a sober calculation, could not take this path, although it was tempting. Although weakened, there was a large enemy group near Stalingrad, which had powerful military equipment and was still far from devoid of combat capability. Underestimate her, especially in early December, was by no means impossible. I.V. Stalin rejected the proposal to "open the gates" to Paulus, suggesting that its authors keep this idea to themselves."

From this text it is impossible to understand who was the author of the "hare" plan. Another oddity: the plan was to leave the 6th Army in the cauldron under guard, but the next phrase refers to "opening the gates". Alas, this is an attempt to retroactively justify and substantiate the decisions of the Headquarters and the General Staff. Vasilevsky speaks in Aesopian language about a change in plans that had unfortunate consequences, but he does it in such a way that the reader, God forbid, does not understand the essence. When planning the Stalingrad operation (beginning November 19, code name Uranus), it was decided that it would be followed by Operation Saturn (tentative start [December 0] — the capture of Rostov from

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with the aim of locking up the German forces on the southern flank: Army Group A in the Caucasus and Group B in the bend of the Don. Initially, Vasilevsky wanted to entrust this task to the 2nd Guards Army of Malinovsky, which was in the reserve of the Headquarters in Tambov. But when this army arrived in the Stalingrad region, plans began to change. There were more Germans in the ring than the Soviet command had expected. Vasilevsky's first impulse was to throw the 2nd Guards against Stalingrad in order to tighten the encirclement. Soon, however, it had to be used to repulse Manstein's troops moving to the rescue of Paulus. As a result, there were no forces left for Operation Saturn, and it was transformed into "Little Saturn" (Sa, SweeKow's agee\$(Oee+), p. 310).

It seems that Vasilevsky himself later realized his mistake, although he expresses this in a very peculiar way (p. 248):

"By the way, the commander of the Don Front, my friend K.K. Rokossovsky did not agree with the transfer of the 2nd Guards Army to the Stalingrad Front. Moreover, he persistently asked not to do this and tried to persuade I.V. Stalin.

After the war, he repeatedly recalled this.

"You were still wrong then," said Konstantin Konstantinovich. "With the 2nd Guards, even before the approach of Manstein, I would have defeated the starving and freezing divisions of Paulus."

No matter how you look at it, the Soviet command miscalculated. If Stalin and Vasilevsky had figured out that hunger, cold and disease would soon finish off Paulus's army anyway, then out of the six armies thrown into the "Ring" operation, three or four could be used to quickly master Rostov. Had this vital assembly fallen into Soviet hands 2-3 weeks earlier (it remained with the Germans until February 14), the troops of Manstein and Kleist would not have succeeded in a planned retreat with all their equipment. Such a turn of events would be fraught with far-reaching consequences. But the Headquarters and the General Staff chased easy prey - to finish off the dying soldiers of Paulus.

The strange expression "together with K.K. Rokossovsky, after consulting with A.I. Eremenko" reflects the real situation, but again in encrypted form. Rokossovsky, many years after the war, told Pavlenko (p. 350) that

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A.I. Eremenko considered this operation not only unnecessary, but also harmful, since it took tens of thousands of lives in vain.
Soviet soldiers.

Of course, in Eremenko's assessment, in addition to common military sense, there is a bitter emotional element. It was his Stalingrad front that endured the most nightmarish months of the battle, but now the Don Front of Rokossovsky was sent to reprisal Paulus, in addition, taking three of his armies - 62, 64 and 57 from Yeremenko. Rokossovsky, according to Pavlenko's information, believed that the operation "Ring" gave rise to imitation among many military leaders in conducting "destructive" battles and operations and the so-called "assaults" of cities and towns. Such methods of conducting battles and operations (frontal assaults and attacks) inevitably led to large losses in personnel. Often, these losses were many times greater than the losses in the enemy troops.

Unfortunately, we will have to convince ourselves more than once of the validity of this observation of the marshal.

Here is how Liddell Garth describes the situation ([194e] Nap, p. 477 foot). While the German 6th Army agonized in the ring, the threat of the Stalingrad type hung over Army Group A in the Caucasus. On its left flank, the Russians captured Mozdok, on the right - Nalchik. An even greater danger was the advance of Soviet troops through the Kalmyk steppes at the junction of Army Groups A and Don. After occupying Elista, they set their sights on Armavir to cut off Group A's only railroad supply route. In addition, there was a Soviet advance from Stalingrad to Rostov, through which both army groups were supplied. The Soviet units approached this knot by To km. According to Manstein (Mapel'm, p. 370), the current strategic situation foreshadowed a general catastrophe. If the enemy, who has great numerical superiority and complete freedom of action, can capture the crossings across the Don at Rostov and across the Dnieper at Dnepropetrovsk, the entire southern German flank will be left without supplies. As a result, sooner or later, the army groups of Kleist and Manstein would have been destroyed, which would seal the fate of the entire Eastern Front.

Hitler at this time continued to be most concerned with ideological symbols and propaganda. December 27, 1942

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Kleist received a formidable order not to retreat under any circumstances. The next day, quite unexpectedly, a new order came: to withdraw the army groups of Kleist and Manstein to the Konstantinovka-Salsk-Armavir line, 200 km west of Stalingrad (Zeaon, Kiosso-Serman \ag, p. 331). Here is the story of this decision as told by Zeitler (Fatal Decisions, p. 198):

"When the attempt to unblock Stalingrad failed, I again tried to get Hitler's sanction for the evacuation of troops from the Caucasus. He refused to listen to me both then and on the following days, when I turned to him on this urgent matter. At the end of December, however, he apparently gave up. Once, alone with him, I described the situation in the south and ended my report as follows: "If you do not give the order to retreat from the Caucasus now, then soon we will have to survive the second Stalingrad."

Apparently, this made an impression on Hitler, and I had to take advantage of his indecision. I managed to literally squeeze consent out of him. "All right," he said at last, "give the appropriate order." Leaving the room, I gave the order to retreat by telephone directly from Hitler's waiting room. I ordered that the order be given to the troops immediately and that their withdrawal begin at once.

I wasn't in a hurry. When I arrived at my headquarters only half an hour later, an urgent telephone message was already waiting for me: Hitler ordered me to call him immediately. Knowing in advance what this meant, I picked up the phone and asked to be connected to Hitler. He said: "Do not give orders for the retreat from the Caucasus yet. Tomorrow we will discuss this issue again."

So Hitler was about to start a new series of endless delays, postponing a decision until it was too late to do anything about it. I said, "My Fuhrer, it's too late. I sent an order from your headquarters, and now it has already reached the front-line units and formations. The retreat began. To cancel the order now is to cause incredible confusion. I have to ask you not to do this."

Hitler was silent, apparently not knowing what to decide. Finally, he said, "Okay, so be it."

At the end of December 1942, the Soviet [enforcement headquarters planned the offensive of the Golikov Voronezh Front in the sector against

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450 km from Livna to Kantemirovka. From the north, he was supported by the Bryansk Front of Reiter, from the south - by the South-Western Vatutin. Golikov was given three weeks to prepare the operation, the start date was January 15. During this time he accumulated great firepower - 130-140 guns per kilometer of the front. The enemy was taken by surprise. The first objective, the double encirclement of Yana's 2nd Hungarian army, was achieved on 18 January. A snowstorm made it impossible to keep a tight ring, nevertheless, by January 27, according to Soviet data, 86 thousand people, mainly Hungarians, were captured. The threat of a new encirclement arose around Voronezh, which Hitler did not allow to surrender for a long time. At the last moment, 7 divisions set fire to and left the city. In a 25-degree frost, they broke through to Rylsk, having completed an [80-kilometer march. Almost all equipment was abandoned.

A gap more than 300 km wide was formed in the German positions of the former Army Group B. This posed a threat to the 2nd German Army and the retreating Army Group Don. The tactics of the Red Army changed. Now, having met strong pockets of resistance, the Soviet units bypassed them. The reserves of the German command in this area were scanty: one division taken from Army Group Center and the 2nd SS Panzer Corps, which was on its way from Western Europe.

By January 23, the General Staff hastily drew up a plan for a new operation, codenamed Zvezda; Golikov was now given the task of mastering the Kharkov industrial region. The Voronezh Front did not get a respite, the start of the operation was scheduled for | February. At this time, Zhukov returned from the front. At his suggestion, Golikov added one more goal: to move on the right flank to Kursk. The General Staff, Stalin and Zhukov were not worried that they would have to attack along diverging operational directions. In addition, as Shtemenko stated in hindsight (vol. 1, p. 92), "The Voronezh Front advanced with armies in line and almost no reserves." A similar position was with Vatutin, who went to Mariupol on the Sea of Azov, threatening to cut off the army groups of Manstein and Kleist.

On February 2, Stalingrad was completely liberated. On the same day, the Soviet operation to capture Kharkov began. The 3rd Panzer Army of Rybalko approached the Donets on the 5th, but due to the fierce resistance of the Germans, it was able to cross the frozen

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the river in eight days. On February 9, Moskalenko's 40th Army liberated Belgorod. A day earlier, Chernyakhovsky's 60th Army entered Kursk. On February 16, the SS Panzer Corps left Kharkov under the threat of encirclement - contrary to the categorical order of the Fuhrer. Vasilevsky called Stalin, they agreed that the offensive would continue. Reigned in the Soviet headquarters

euphoria. Commanders were showered with awards and honors. On January 18, the marshal rank was awarded to Zhukov, on February 16 - to Vasilevsky. This last production was all the more unexpected since he had become General of the Army only a month before.

The result of the victory at Stalingrad is difficult to overestimate. For the first time during the war, the Red Army inflicted a decisive defeat on the Wehrmacht - of the caliber of Kyiv, Vyazma or Kharkov. Something similar was planned after the defeat near Moscow, but it was followed by defeats in the spring and summer of 1942. Having achieved gigantic success at Stalingrad, the Soviet command fell into a state of optimistic ecstasy. Stalin and his generals came to the conclusion that they now determined the course of the war, in other words, the strategic initiative was in their hands.

Stalin was easily carried away by his dreams up and into the distance. After the counteroffensive near Moscow, he hastened to set the task of clearing the Soviet territory of the enemy in 1942. This was the old Bolshevik disease - unbridled premature optimism, when at the first successes one gets the feeling that the final goal has already been achieved. Hence the peppy calls "Give us Europe!", "Five-year plan in four years!", "Catch up and overtake!" and so on.

MANSTEIN HANGOVER

At the beginning of 1943, Stalin and the commanders of the fronts were eager to attack, believing that the fortunes of the war had turned to face them.

In the south, Vatutin wanted to cut off the enemy's escape routes from the Donbass. He submitted his considerations to Headquarters on January 19 and received approval to carry out Operation Leap. "Its goal was to encircle a larger German grouping in the Donbass than the Stalingrad one. Vatutin's resources were insufficient

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accurate, for example, motor vehicles could deliver only 900 tons of fuel instead of the required 2000, but this did not cool the ardor of the commander. On January 27, he created a mobile group led by his deputy, General Popov. This group nominally included 4 tank corps, 2 separate tank brigades, 3 rifle divisions and 3 ski brigades. In total there were 180 tanks, which on average had one refueling and | -2 ammunition. The number of tanks in Popov's group is alarming. According to the staff of that time, the brigade should have had 46 tanks, and the corps - 100. Thus, instead of 492 tanks, Popov was given less than half, and even poorly equipped ones. This did not bode well. Nevertheless, the group was thrown into the offensive two days after the formation. Here's what happened next (Shtemenko, book [, p. 195):

"The mobile group actually turned out to be inactive. Tank corps, drowning in the snow, walked along disjointed routes at a considerable distance from each other. They were often subjected to strikes by enemy air superiority and counterattacks by its ground forces. From time to time the tanks stopped due to lack of fuel.

By this time, von Manstein, commander of Army Group Don, had long realized that the situation of his troops and the entire German front in the East was bad, almost catastrophic. Here are his considerations (Manzelen, pp. 371-372):

"The operational plan of the Russians was obvious. It was presented to them on a silver platter when the German high command allowed the front to freeze in the last phase of the summer offensive. It was quite natural that the Russians would seize the opportunity to encircle the 6th Army, which had stuck to Stalingrad. It was expected that the enemy would continue to build on his crushing successes in the Romanian, Hungarian and Italian sectors and try, attacking with growing scope and strength, to bypass the German southern wing from the north and west. His goal will be to cut the communications of this wing and surround it on the seashore.

Manstein, knowing that the fate of Paulus's army had been decided, offered to quickly withdraw the German troops beyond the Seversky Donets. Hitler did not agree. At the end of December, he allowed the withdrawal of Kleist's troops, but at the same time he wanted to somehow

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to keep the oil fields in the Maykop region in some unknown way (which, it is worth noting, the Germans could not yet use, since the Russians blew up the fields). The Fuhrer insisted that Kleist gain a foothold in the Kuban. Only on January 24 did he finally allow the evacuation of one part of Group A, namely Mackensen's 1st Panzer Army, through Rostov to begin. The cover was to be provided by Manstein's troops. The remaining troops of the Kleist group, on the orders of Hitler, settled on the Taman Peninsula, where they were of little use to Manstein in Ukraine. The clouds were gathering over him. The Voronezh Front, on Stalin's orders, advanced on the Dnieper crossings in Zaporozhye and Dnepropetrovsk. On February 6, Manstein and the commander of Army Group Center Kluge flew to Hitler's headquarters in East Prussia. The Fuhrer agreed to the withdrawal of Manstein's troops beyond the Mius, Kluge received permission to clear the Rzhev salient. Manstein wanted to convince Hitler to appoint someone who would lead the ground forces on behalf of the Führer, meaning himself. Nothing came of it. [Manstein's group received a new name - Army Group "South".

Hitler, as usual, attached great importance to geographic values. On the morning of February 14, he ordered to hold Kharkov at any cost. Unfortunately, on the same day, an uprising began in the city. The commander of the SS Panzer Corps Obergruppen Führer Hausser decided to leave the city - contrary to the direct order of his chief, commander of the task force Lanz. By midnight, he changed his mind and reported that he would defend the city to the last soldier. The next morning, Hitler told Lanz that holding Kharkov was his only task. But it was too late. In the afternoon, only a narrow corridor remained for leaving the city and units of the SS division "Das Reich" left the northern suburbs. Lanz had no choice but to agree. A day later, the Germans completely cleared Kharkov. An enraged Hitler replaced Lanz, appointing General Kempf in his place. The SS commanders escaped with a slight fright.

Even earlier, Hitler's nerves could not stand it. On February 17, accompanied by Zeidler and Jodl, he arrived at Manstein's headquarters in Zaporozhye, with the aim of relieving the commander from his post. At the very least, he wanted Kharkov back immediately. Manstein urged him that it was not right now.

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also. The Fuhrer insisted. Case decided the case. On February 18, the SS division "Totenkopf", which, according to Hitler, was supposed to take part in the attack on Kharkov, reported that it was stuck in the mud east of Kiev. You see, said Manstein, the very two divisions that had lost him remain for the attack on Kharkov. Hitler reluctantly agreed that now the main thing was to fill the gap left by the loss of Kharkov.

Manstein laid out his plan for the counteroffensive. The Field Marshal explained that the farther to the west and southwest the Russians advanced, the more effective his counterattack would be. Soviet troops were drawn into the cauldron, as the German troops firmly held the defense near Krasnograd, as well as along the banks of the Mius River and northeast of Stalino. [Hitler accepted the Manstein plan. Moreover, it seems that he realized his miscalculation when he ordered to send almost half a million Kleist troops to the Taman Peninsula, where they stuck around idle. 50 thousand of them were airlifted to Manstein, however, without weapons and technology.

Meanwhile, Soviet troops were rapidly advancing from Barvenkov and Lozova. 2] February, the tanks of the South-Western Front reached the Dnieper on the outskirts of Zaporozhye. The offensive in the direction of Poltava also continued. What happened next was like a bolt from the blue.

The hangover for our troops was bitter. The Soviet commanders got carried away with the offensive, ignoring the fact that large Wehrmacht forces remained in their rear. Meanwhile, the German 4th Panzer Army was ready to launch a counterattack northwest of Stalino. On the right was the 48th Panzer Corps, consisting of three panzer divisions, and on the left was the SS Panzer Corps, consisting of two panzer divisions - "Leibstandarte" and "Reich".

The Germans created a strike force and launched a counteroffensive against the troops of the Southwestern Front in the Donbass, striking them on the left flank. Manstein intended to push the Soviet troops from the south, and later to strike at the rear from the east. On February 22, five German tank divisions of Army Group South began to advance in a northwesterly direction. The 48th Panzer Corps struck at Barvenkovo, and its rapid advance was a complete disaster for the Soviet troops.

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surprise. A few days later, the 17th German Panzer Division reached the Seversky Donets in the Izyum-Protopopovka section, and the SS Panzer Corps captured Lozovaya.

The Soviet troops could not hold on to the achieved lines. In the snow-covered steppe, the retreating units were visible for many kilometers, and the Wehrmacht artillery successfully fired at them.

Let us first give the floor to Vasilevsky (p. 294):

"The blow that followed on February 19 for the Soviet troops of the South-Western Front, who advanced during the winter offensive to the Dnieper and were stationed not far from Zaporozhye, was extremely unexpected. By the end of February, in the course of fierce battles, the enemy managed to push our troops back beyond the Seversky Donets. How did it happen? Since these events are little covered, I will dwell on them in somewhat more detail. The commanders of the Southwestern and Voronezh Fronts incorrectly assessed the strategic situation that had developed by mid-February on this wing of the Soviet-German front.

The marshal proceeds to describe little-reported events, but cannot resist the temptation to throw up a smokescreen. The possibility of a German counterattack was overlooked not only by the front commanders, but also by Stalin and himself. This period—from mid-February to mid-March 1943—was long passed over in staunch silence in Soviet military literature. Shtemenko gives a fairly truthful picture of this period, but Manstein's name is never mentioned. The reasons are not difficult to understand. At that moment, when in Moscow and in the headquarters of the fronts the generals were exhausted from banquets, when, as it seemed to them, the words of the old combatant song were coming true:

So louder music play victory, We won, and the enemy runs, runs, runs! —

the Germans suddenly resurrected like a phoenix from the ashes, and began to inflict one defeat after another on the Soviet troops.

We must still pay tribute to Vasilevsky. He describes the course of hostilities quite realistically - although not without some violations of logic. Thus, accusing Golikov and Vatutin of being slow-witted, he admits on the next page that:

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"...both the Headquarters and the General Staff made the same mistake as the commanders of the South-Western and Voronezh fronts: they did not expect the enemy's offensive operations, considering him defeated here. <...> At the same time, the Headquarters did not take any measures to strengthen their troops. As a result, the Southwestern Front continued to advance with fighting in the western and southwestern directions, every day increasing the width of the offensive front, which had already reached more than 400 km by the beginning of the enemy counteroffensive. In addition, as a result of continuous and prolonged offensive battles, our troops suffered heavy losses in manpower and equipment and, due to their excessive distance from supply bases, experienced an acute shortage of ammunition.

The size of Soviet losses is not named, but more cannot be demanded from the Soviet marshal. Now, after the publication of the work edited by Krivosheev, we can name the numbers. The Voronezh-Kharkov offensive operation lasted 50 days, from January 13 to March 3, 1943. Three fronts took part in it - Bryansk, Voronezh and South-Western, the total number of troops was more than half a million people. Irrecoverable losses of personnel (killed and missing) - more than 55 thousand people, or 11%. The total losses, taking into account the wounded and sick, amounted to 154 thousand people, or over 30%.

So, in order. At first, the regrouping of Manstein's forces was overlooked on the Soviet side. In the tenth of February, the SS tank corps moved from near Kharkov to the Krasnograd region, and two army tank corps of the Gotha army, the 48th and 40th, moved from the left flank of the Southwestern Front to the Krasnoarmeisky region. This was taken as the beginning of the German retreat across the Dnieper. Vatutin rushed to reach the Dnieper before the start of spring impassability, for which he received Stalin's permission.

Manstein's group was supposed to hold a front approximately from Belgorod to Mariupol on the Sea of Azov. Here are his troops from left to right: Kempf's group, Hoth's 4th Panzer Army, Mackensen's 1st Panzer Army, Holidt's group. Mackensen launched an offensive with energy that the enemy did not expect from him. He cleared Slavyansk to free up one panzer division and sent two more to encircle Popov's mobile group. Popov assessed his situation on

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100% wrong. On February 22, he sent a radio message, intercepted by the Germans, that he intended to block the enemy's withdrawal. The next day the general understood what was going on. He reported that almost all paths were cut off for him, and the panic in one part had to be suppressed by extreme measures. On the 24th, the group made a desperate attempt to break out of the encirclement, which it succeeded, but with heavy losses.

On February 22, Goth's 4th Panzer Army went on the offensive. The 48th Panzer Corps, unexpectedly for the Soviet troops, struck at Barvenkovo. A few days later, the 17th German Panzer Division reached the Seversky Donets in the Izyum-Protopopovka section, and the SS Panzer Corps captured the Lozovaya station. Soviet troops could not gain a foothold on their lines. Departing across the snowy steppe, they were a good target for enemy artillery.

As a result of the rapid withdrawal of the right wing of the Southwestern Front, a mortal threat arose to the Soviet troops on the left wing of Golikov's Voronezh Front, but they continued to advance in a westerly direction. On March 4, it was their turn. The tank army of Hoth attacked the Soviet 3rd tank army. Vasilevsky, who arrived at Golikov's headquarters in Belgorod, immediately asked Stalin for help. He handed over to Golikov the Rybalko group from the Southwestern Front, but this did not help. Trishkin's caftan of the Soviet offensive was bursting at the seams. On March 7, the resistance of the 3rd Panzer Army was broken. Vasilevsky calls it heroic, but it lasted only three days. The withdrawal to Kharkov began. The Germans bypassed the city and attacked it from the north and east. On March 15, the SS Panzer Corps captured Kharkov, paying a high price - about 11 thousand soldiers and officers. Soviet losses were even greater: 40,000 men and over 300 tanks. About a thousand more tanks were lost in the battles of the previous weeks. On March 18, the Germans took Belgorod. The German line of defense in the south from Taganrog to Belgorod was restored.

In short, as a result of the operation, Manstein managed in a few weeks to carry out a successful withdrawal, conduct a counterattack, inflicting a defeat on the troops of the Voronezh and Southwestern fronts, and restore the line of defense in the south from Taganrog to Belgorod.

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According to Soviet sources, Manstein's offensive was stopped by Zhukov and the Stavka reserves. In fact, a thaw has struck, heralding the beginning of the spring thaw. There was a three-month respite in hostilities.

The results were disappointing. We have already talked about the offensive phase during the retreat, the official name is the Kharkov defensive operation, two fronts numbering 346 thousand in 22 days suffered a total loss of more than 86 thousand people, or 25% of the personnel. Who wants to, can take stock of the entire enterprise.

Manstein's victories raised the morale of the German troops and caused a shock in the Headquarters. As a result, at the beginning of the summer campaign, a clear passivity was noticeable in the behavior of the Soviet command. Perhaps it was under the influence of Manstein's counteroffensive, which demonstrated that the rumors about the defeat of the Wehrmacht were "somewhat exaggerated", that the Soviet troops behaved passively in the first stage of the 1943 summer campaign. Such was the sad ending of the Soviet offensive after the victory in the Battle of Stalingrad, which was the result of another underestimation of the capabilities of the Wehrmacht and an overestimation of its own forces.

This, however, did not prevent Stalin from carrying out another shuffling of the generals. Vatutin was transferred to the Voronezh Front instead of Golikov, who was recalled to the disposal of the Headquarters. Vatutin was replaced by Malinovsky, who was replaced on the Southern Front by Commander-57 Tolbukhin. The fact that Golikov was removed from the front is not surprising: his losses were outstanding. In 72 days, the Voronezh Front lost 154,000 people — 44% of its personnel. This episode did not spoil Golikov's career, he rose to the rank of Marshal and Deputy Minister of Defense.

After the war, they learned to depict the Soviet failure with a fig leaf. Here is how Vasilevsky does it (p. 297):

"The failure of the spring counteroffensive, during which the Germans achieved limited success, did not sober up the leaders of the Wehrmacht."

It must be admitted that the Soviet public still had a chance to learn about Manstein's phenomenal counteroffensive. In 1957, a Russian translation of Liddell Hart's book "Strategy of Indirect Action" was published, where we read for the first time with amazement (p. 354):

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"Manstein regrouped his troops and transferred three battered tank groups from the turn of the river. Mius, turning their front to the northwest. On February 26, he launched an offensive to the flank and rear of the enemy armies, as it was at Sedan in 1940. Within a week, the Russian armies, advancing to the south-west, rolled back in disorder across the Seversky Donets, losing over 600 tanks and 1000 guns. After that, Manstein turned north, hitting the rear of the Russian armies advancing west from Kharkov and Belgorod. Here the Russians were also defeated and retreated, leaving both cities. The results of Manstein's successive indirect actions were astonishing for an army that carried out this operation in unfavorable conditions with a division ratio of 1:8. If not for Manstein's lack of strength, the operation could have led to the same decisive results as the battle of Sedan. However, the superiority of the Russian forces was too great.

After the numbers 1:8, there was a remarkable, persuasive note from the editor of the book, Lieutenant General Krasilnikov, "There was no such balance of forces." Dot. The lapidary general was not entirely wrong. Manstein himself gives the ratio 1:7,

given that the Russian divisions are smaller than the German ones. In general, this episode once again showed that the level of the Soviet command was still inferior to the German one. [Generals equal to Manstein, Stalin did not have.

KURSK DUGA

Deliberate defense or an attempt at a separate peace?

In the spring, the Headquarters had 9 reserve armies, on April 30 they created the Reserve Front with a field center near Voronezh; it was soon renamed: first into the Stepnoy Okrug, then into the Stepnoy Front — do not ask for what purpose.

The Soviet side was preparing for a new offensive. Vasilevsky (p. 303-304):

"It seemed that we had done everything to organize our offensive. However, soon, in the plan outlined by the Headquarters, summer

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th offensive, which provided for the main attack in the South-Western direction, significant amendments were made. Soviet military intelligence was able to timely reveal the preparation of the Nazi army for a major offensive on the Kursk Bulge and even set its date.

Vasilevsky is trying to convince the reader that this intelligence has dramatically changed all plans. A dilemma arose, which was resolved in a party way:

"To make the only right decision was helped by the collective mind, the creative work of experienced military leaders and headquarters, wise from two years of war, from the front level to the Supreme High Command. Analyzing intelligence data on the preparation of the enemy for the offensive, the fronts, the General Staff and the Headquarters gradually leaned towards the idea of switching to a deliberate defense. This issue was repeatedly discussed in the State Defense Committee and the Stavka at the end of March - beginning of April.

The term deliberate defense is original, but not convincing. A preliminary decision on the transition to it was made [April 2, it looks like a reaction to the loss of Kharkov. It appears that Stalin was initially inclined to advance, but was dissuaded by Zhukov and Vasilevsky. Of course, it was not without a gloss (Vasilevsky, p. 298): "The Red Army, having temporarily gone on the defensive, retained the initiative."

There is another possible factor. There were rumors of an attempt at a separate peace. Something certainly happened at the beginning of the summer. Here is an up-to-date message from the Internet:

"In June 1943, Hitler arranged a secret meeting with the Russians in Kirovograd, 30 kilometers behind the German front line. Ribbentrop, on behalf of Hitler, offered to end the war on the condition that [Germany retain the Ukraine and all territories west of the Dnieper. Molotov, who represented Stalin, replied that they would never agree to anything less than pre-war borders. Hitler ordered a deliberate leak of information about this conference to the Allies, after which Stalin immediately broke off the negotiations. Neither the Germans nor the Russians officially acknowledge that the Kirovograd meeting took place at all.

The link in this material is somewhat vague - Raupe. Which Payne are you talking about? One possible candidate is the renowned historian of fascism, Stanley J. Payne (Raupe,

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R. 366). After Hitler failed to win the war with the USSR in 1942, the Third Reich waged an increasingly desperate struggle of attrition on numerous fronts against adversaries who outnumbered it in economic and demographic resources. German hopes of victory soon vanished, but Hitler retained his iron resolve. He hoped to divide his enemies and achieve a separate peace on one front or another, again conducting secret negotiations with Stalin in 1943-1944. This time, however, Hitler was stubbornly unwilling to pay Stalin's price, so the unnatural alliance of Western democracies and the Soviet Union held firm, driving the Third Reich almost inexorably towards defeat. It held out until May 1945 thanks to Hitler's determination, the iron grip of the Nazi dictatorship, the regime's ability to induce self-sacrifice, the merciless plunder of the resources of occupied Europe, and the exceptional skill of the German army, which the enemy could outnumber but not outnumber. military art.

Not too specific references to the Soviet-German negotiations in 1943 can be found in other sources (see, in particular, Keerap, p. 177; -610). At that time, Stalin had a very significant superiority over Hitler (see the table below): in manpower - more than 2 times, not counting reserves, in tanks - 4.5 times, in aircraft - 4.25 times. Why, one wonders, did he enter into negotiations at all? I don't have an exact answer, but I think it's not from humanism. It is difficult to suspect the Soviet leader of wanting to avoid losses. It seems that he did not have much faith in the abilities of his "experienced commanders and headquarters, wise after two years of the war." After the subject lesson received from Manstein in the spring of 1943, this cannot be ruled out.

More broadly, it was time for Hitler to think about long-term results, about how to save Germany from the devastation she experienced in the Thirty Years' War. He should not have forgotten that [Germany has no serious natural barriers on its borders. But for the Nazi dictator, history existed only as a source of propaganda. He did not want to admit the obvious that winning the war was impossible for him, and in his environment there was no

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there were sober minds who could take the fate of the country into their own hands.

Stalin, quite possibly, would have agreed to conclude peace if Hitler had agreed to completely clear the Soviet territory. This, of course, is just a speculative conjecture, but it cannot be ruled out.

Be that as it may, the opportunity to end the war 2 years earlier and save many millions of human lives did not last long, but was missed.

Spring 1943: strategic situation

Here are the forces that the belligerents on the Eastern Front had at their disposal in the spring of 1943 (see Candi apa Noise, pp. 151, 390):

NOST guns Wehrmacht 169 r (147 infantry | 2,732,000 | 1336 6360 on the Eastern Front and 22 tank)

Red Army (operational fronts 5 792000 | 6040 20 683 and armies)

It is also worth citing the total strength of the Soviet Armed Forces as of April 3, 1943 (Central Party Archive, UML, fund 644, op. 1, file 100):

Red Army, total allowance 9486 000 And Including:

in hospitals 1,066,000

operational fronts and armies of the PI 5,792,000 non-operational forces 1,469,000 (Transcaucasia and the Far East)

2225 000

Fleet 140000 | to 140 [Subordinate to GKO [71800 | |Total armed we 11107500 | |

Despite the solid superiority, Stalin preferred to wait. Hitler planned to fight a decisive battle, which

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could turn the tide of the war. From a military point of view, it was a dubious undertaking, to say the least. Manstein (b. 443):

"Obviously, after the loss of a large number of main formations, Germany did not have enough strength to organize a decisive offensive on the scale of 1941 or 1942. There was still the possibility - with the right leadership on the German side - to exhaust the Soviet Union to such an extent that he will have, in view of his enormous losses, to accept a draw.

According to Manstein, in order to achieve such a goal, it was necessary to switch to a mobile strategic defense and deliver local strikes in order to exhaust the enemy. Such a view in the conditions of the spring of forty-three was, of course, not indisputable. The Western allies had already landed in North Africa, their appearance on the European continent was inevitable. It should be taken into account that for the Germans the Western theater of operations seemed more important than the Eastern one. Perhaps, besides the geographical proximity to Germany, memories of the First World War played a role here. Then the victory over Soviet Russia did not save the Germans from a general defeat in 1918 in France.

Hitler still decided to attack. The target was a section where the front line curved to the west. This ledge - 250 km from north to south, 160 km from east to west - went down in history as the Kursk salient. The elimination of this wedge would lead to a reduction in the front line, which, given the superiority of the enemy, seemed very desirable to the Germans. The plan for the operation, code-named Citadel, was outlined in the operational orders of the OKW dated 13 March and 6 April and received the support of Chief of the General Staff Zeidler. On his initiative, Hitler convened a meeting in Munich on May 3 to discuss

details of the impending attack.

Not all those present considered the operation expedient. [Colonel General Model, whose 9th Army was to advance from the northern face of the Kursk salient, reported that, according to aerial photographs, the Russians were building multi-lane defensive structures, building exactly where the Germans planned to strike. In addition, he feared that his main striking force, the T-U] tanks, would be easy prey for the Russians. Git

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Ler then suggested postponing the operation until June, when new models of tanks would arrive at the front. According to Manstein, whose task it was to attack from the south, the time for the operation was very limited, it should have started as early as April. Only the head of the Model, Field Marshal Kluge, showed enthusiasm. Zeidler suggested that the new tanks T-U ("panther") and T UT ("tiger") would give the Germans a decisive advantage, but his ardor was cooled by Guderian, appointed inspector of armored forces, and Speer, minister of armaments. The new models were promising, but there were still many technical problems.

Hitler hesitated and made no decision. In a conversation with Guderian a week later, he admitted that "just thinking about this offensive, my stomach starts to hurt." On June 18, the OKW (Keitel and Jodl) proposed that the operation be cancelled. The coming summer promises surprises, for this reason it is better to create two strategic reserves: one in Germany, the second, which would consist of two armies intended for the Citadel, behind the Eastern Front, near the railway. These reserves can be transferred to the Balkans or to Italy if necessary. In the end, the Fuehrer felt that politically he needed a successful offensive. The start of the operation was scheduled for 5 July.

By this time, on the Soviet side, the command literally did not find a place for itself from waiting, especially Vatutin, who complained about the uselessly lost summer time. But the Headquarters and the General Staff preferred to wait. They waited all May

then all of June. Three warnings were issued to the fronts about the beginning of the German offensive, only the last one turned out to be real. Shtemenko writes that even Stalin did not always keep outward calm (book I, p. 134):

"I.V. Stalin showed some nervousness. And perhaps it was precisely because of this that one day a storm broke out at Headquarters. A message was received there about sending fighter planes with unsuitable skin to the Kursk Bulge. Stalin then concluded that our entire fighter aviation was unfit for combat."

Contrary to statements about maintaining the initiative, the Soviet command followed Hitler's lead for three long months. The Führer decided to attack the Kursk salient, Stalin began to gather troops there and build fortifications. The question of why he did this is not as naive as it seems. In the very

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In fact, you seem to be stronger than the enemy. He's going to strike in a certain area. Why not outplay him strategically? For example, pretend that you are building fortifications, but remove the troops from the ledge and prepare an offensive in another place. Let the Germans strike into the void. Another option is to launch a pre-emptive strike elsewhere. In the spring of 1943, the Germans were short of resources. Preparing for the attack on Kursk, they could not hold an equally strong defense along the entire front. None of this was done. Stalin and his generals cannot be accused of excessive ingenuity or wild strategic imagination. Another conclusion: the initiative remained in the hands of the German command. As it turned out, the last time, but that doesn't make it any easier.

"Citadel": a strange and bloody massacre

According to the approved plan of operation, Model's 9th Army attacked from the north along the Orel-Kursk line, while Gotha's 4th Panzer Army advanced on Kursk from the south of Belgorod; its eastern flank was covered by task force Kempf. The idea was simple and obvious to the enemy, there was no chance to deceive or mislead the Soviet side.

[The German command began the operation with the following forces: 780,900 men, 2,078 tanks, 850 assault guns. By the way, assault guns are what the Soviet side called self-propelled guns, self-propelled artillery mounts. In fact, this is an armored gun on a tank chassis, but without a turret.

The Luftwaffe at that time had about 2,500 combat aircraft, half of which were sent to support the Citadel. During the last two weeks of June, German aviation carried out night attacks on industrial facilities within its reach: a tank factory in Gorky, a rubber factory in Yaroslavl, and oil refineries in Saratov and Astrakhan. Simultaneously, there were bombings of railways and airfields in the Kursk region.

On the Soviet side, Rokossovsky's Central Front in the north and Vatutin's Voronezh in the south prepared for battle. They concentrated two-thirds of their tanks and

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tilleria in sectors where a German offensive was expected. Thousands of soldiers and local residents created a grandiose defense in depth. On the front line, 3-5 lines of trenches were prepared with firing positions and dugouts. Similar lines were built at a distance of 10 and 25 km from the front line. This configuration was repeated 40 km from the front. Only in the zone of the Central Front, the total length of the trenches was over 4 thousand km.

Behind the troops of Rokossovsky and Vatutin (over 1.336 million people, 19,974 guns and mortars, 3,396 tanks, 133 self-propelled guns and 2,900 aircraft), on the open eastern face of the Kursk salient, was the Konev Steppe Front (573,000 men, 7,400 guns and mortars, and 1,550 tanks and self-propelled guns) (see Vasilevsky, p. 312). According to Sokolov, the ratio of forces was 1.8: | in favor of the Soviet side. Everything was ready to start the mass destruction of people and equipment.

Half an hour before the start of the German artillery preparation, the Soviet side launched its own. Model's 9th Army attacked with three tank corps (one in reserve) on a 50 km front. By the end of the first day, she broke through the main line of defense of Rokossovsky, but could not advance far. On the south side, two German tank corps launched an offensive on a 45-kilometer front to the left of Belgorod. They crossed the Vatutin main line in two hours. After that came the surprises. Hurricane fire from Soviet artillery forced the 2nd SS Panzer Corps to seek cover. At this time, a thunderstorm hit the 4th Panzer Army, which flooded numerous ravines. The advance of the tanks stopped in many places. After the German aviation suppressed the Soviet batteries, the SS tank corps continued to advance, but soon ran into minefields skillfully camouflaged in tall grass. During this time, Vatutin was able, avoiding heavy losses, to withdraw his troops behind the second line of fortifications.

To the south of Belgorod, the Germans crossed the Donets and got into a five-kilometer defense zone between the river and the railway. They had no air support, but they were constantly attacked by Soviet aircraft, causing serious damage.

The second and third days of the operation went better for the Germans: the 9th Army advanced 8-2 km, although its right flank was stopped. Rokossovsky counterattacked from the second day of the opera

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tions. On the southern front, the advanced units of the SS Panzer Corps moved forward 35 km. Soon the Soviet side began to send its reserves into battle - by the way, where the Germans expected them according to intelligence.

On July 8, the central corps of the 9th Army ran into a heavily fortified watershed southwest of Olkhovatka. Model realized that there would be no quick breakthrough to Kursk. On the 10th and 11th German attempts to overcome the fortifications failed. On July 12, fresh Soviet forces, the Bryansk Front of Popov and the Western Front of Sokolovsky, went on the offensive against the Oryol group of Germans. [4 divisions of the 2nd Panzer Army, which defended 250 km of the front, could not prevent the Soviet deep

breakthroughs. Kluge had to throw in the reserves intended for the Model to help her. Moreover, he took from the latter two panzer divisions, 50% of the Ferdinand tanks and a significant part of the artillery. On July 14, Model began to withdraw.

In the south, Manstein's troops were more successful. A bridgehead north of the Psel River was captured. South of the river, the Soviet troops were still holding out, but Götth believed that the enemy's position was hopeless. Vatutin, it seems, had exhausted his reserves, while Manstein still had something to his name. He began to advance the 24th Panzer Corps, preparing for an onslaught on Kursk.

The German opinion that Vatutin had exhausted his reserves was only half true. [from directed the tip of his strike to the northeast in order to cover the 1st tank army of Katukov. By the end of the day [| In July, the SS Panzer Corps, with a force of 400 vehicles, was close to wedging itself between the 1st Panzer and 69th armies. In response, the commander of the Voronezh Front, with Zhukov's approval, launched a general counterattack with the forces of five armies, two of which, the 5th Tank Rotmistrova and the 5th Combined Arms Zhadova, both guards, arrived from the Konev Steppe Front. On July 12, the famous Prokhorovka oncoming tank battle took place, which occupies a prominent place in the Soviet mythology of the war.

The exact statistical picture of this massacre is still a matter of controversy. Most often they name 1200 tanks and self-propelled guns on both sides - 800 Soviet and 400 German (see, for example, Can{ an4 Noize, p. 166); Vasilevsky (p. 314) gives the same

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figure, but does not give the ratio of forces. Another source (Defegto, pp. 107-109) reports:

Depending on what is meant by the battle of Prokhorovka, a minimum of 294 German armored fighting vehicles (2nd SS Panzer Corps) and 616 Soviet ones took part in it; maximum - 429 German and 870 Soviet AFVs.

In fact, instead of one big battle from July 10 to 15, there were several unexpected clashes and hasty attacks. The area around Prokhorovka is generally open, divided into natural areas by the Psel and Lipovyy Donets rivers, as well as by the adjacent upland. The 2nd SS Panzer Corps, consisting of three divisions, advanced to the northeast along both banks of the river. Psel. One division, the "Dead Head" ([03 tanks and self-propelled guns), went north of the river, the other two, the tank grenadier "Leibstandarte-SS Adolf Hitler" (77) and "Das Reich" (95), - along the southern coast directly to Prokhorovka. Panzer grenadier divisions are mechanized formations, which included tanks and infantry on armored personnel carriers. The two mentioned divisions were elite. According to other sources, they numbered 135 tanks and 69 self-propelled guns, including 4 "tigers", 8 captured T-34s and 4 obsolete T-Ps.

Rotmistrov's 5th Guards Tank Army was supposed to prevent the 2nd SS Panzer Corps from breaking through. Its task was also to stop the 3rd Panzer Corps, which was marching from Belgorod. The approximate composition of Rotmistrov's forces is as follows: 9501 T-34 tanks, 261 T-70 tanks, 40 English Churchill tanks, 40 self-propelled guns (SU-122 and SU-76), as well as a certain number of heavy KV-1 tanks.

Psychologically and tactically, the battle was reduced to the struggle for possession of the obscure railway station Prokhorovka. The Soviet side, despite its numerical superiority, was in an unfavorable tank situation. Firstly, the Stuka dive bombers were equipped with new automatic cannons, which easily pierced the armor of the T-34s from above. Although the Germans had few "tigers" and "panthers", their 88-mm guns pierced the frontal armor of Soviet tanks from such a distance when they could not hit them. New long-barreled guns T-34 did that

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same thing. The presence of obsolete T-70s on the Soviet side further worsened the situation. Their production continued in [943] only because the car factories that produced them could not be converted to produce heavier models. Soviet tanks had chances to hit enemy vehicles only in close combat. Therefore, Rotmistrov sent them over and over again in suicidal attacks in open areas. This tactic came at a cost. According to his own report, 334 vehicles were irretrievably lost (222 T-34s, 89 T-70s, 12 Churchills and 11 self-propelled guns). With recovered AFVs, total Soviet casualties on that day were close to 400. The Germans lost much less. There is no exact figure, different authors give from 54 to 80 tanks and self-propelled guns.

Anyway, the main result of the Prokhorov battle was that the Germans were stopped. Hoth still hoped to continue the offensive, using the more favorable results of the battles of the 3rd Panzer Corps on the auxiliary line east of Belgorod, but literally the next day his calculations were crossed out. On July 13, Manstein and Kluge, on a call from Hitler, arrived at his headquarters. The Führer announced to them his decision to end Operation Citadel. The Oryol salient is in danger, he said, as is the Donbass. But the main reason is the Allied landing in Sicily [July 0. The Italians are not fighting, it is necessary to form new armies to defend Italy and the Balkans. Troops will have to be taken from the Eastern Front.

Manstein tried to object. The battle has reached its climax; to interrupt it at such a moment is like giving up victory. Kluge did not support him, nothing remained of his May enthusiasm. Hitler allowed Manstein to continue fighting in order to destroy the enemy armored forces, but a few days later he took several tank divisions from Army Group South, which he handed over to Kluge. [July 8, Hoth's Panzer Army and Kempf's group began to withdraw fighting. Manstein writes (p. 448):

"The last German offensive in the East ended in failure, although the enemy lost 4 times more in killed, wounded and captured than the two advancing armies of the "South" group.

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In the Russian translation of Manstein's book, where the text of this chapter, [4th, for some reason not the same as in the English edition, we read (p. 514):

"We succeeded, at least partially, in defeating, along with the enemy's rifle divisions and tank brigades, which were on this front from the very beginning, also a large number of mobile formations of its operational reserves located in the Kursk Bulge region and in front of Khar'. - kovsky front. In general, against the armies of our group stood 11| tank and mechanized corps and 30 rifle divisions.

They lost about 34,000 prisoners. The number of killed reached approximately [7,000]. If calculated in a light favorable to the enemy, then double the number of wounded must be added to this, so that the total losses of the enemy amounted to about 85,000 people.

The losses of both German armies amounted to 20,720, including 3,330 killed. All divisions, with the exception of one panzer division, remained combat-ready, although some of them, namely some infantry divisions, suffered significant losses.

Be that as it may, the last offensive of the German troops on the Eastern Front failed. For the first time, the Red Army was able to stop the German summer offensive. The initiative was firmly transferred to the Soviet side.

"Kutuz OV"

Hitler's decision to end, actually cancel, Operation Citadel did not bring any relief to the Germans. The Soviet command had its own plans, but on July 2 it launched an offensive operation code-named "Kutuzov" in order to eliminate the enemy's Oryol bridgehead. Popov's Bryansk Front and Sokolovsky's Western Front, which did not take part in the Citadel, were the first to enter the cause, then Rokossovsky's Central Front joined them. The first blow was taken by the 2nd Panzer Army of the Germans, whose front was broken through in three places. Hitler immediately subordinated this army to the Model. The masters of quick victories, like Guderian and Manstein, were replaced after the summer of 1943 by genes

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defense lines. Model was a staunch Nazi who firmly believed in Hitler, in addition, he was a skilled tactician.

Hitler, extremely preoccupied with the growing problems in Italy, gave the Model some freedom of action. He received permission to wage an elastic defense instead of the rigid one that the Führer usually insisted on. The main task was to maintain a solid front. Solid reinforcements arrived at Popov and Sokolovsky, but the advance of the Soviet troops was slow and was accompanied by very tangible losses. Heavy rains and even more German tactics interfered. The model was unable to stop the Soviet offensive, but did not allow him to turn around at full power.

Soviet tactics, in the opinion of some Western authors (see, for example, @|a2 apa Noise, p. 188), by the summer of 1943 had greatly improved and become more sophisticated. Such estimates should be taken with caution. The same Glantz gives a picture of the offensive in the Oryol direction. First of all, the huge mass of troops is striking - | 287,600 people (Western Front - 233,300, Bryansk - 409,000, Central - 545,300) (Krivosheev, p. 189). Each division usually deployed 5 or 6 rifle battalions, 160-200 guns, and up to 18 tanks of direct infantry support (NPP) per kilometer of the front. After artillery preparation, lasting two or two and a half hours, the guns created a crawling barrage of fire, under the cover of which the rifle subunits slowly moved forward. Due to the stubbornness of the German defense, it was very often necessary to bring tank corps into action after the initial onslaught of the infantry. Translated into simple language: the infantry paved the way for the tanks. Such tactics can be afforded by those who do not spare their manpower. The tank breakthroughs made by Guderian, List, Goth and Göpner were still beyond the power of the Soviet military leaders.

On August, Rybalko's 3rd Guards Tank Army occupied Oryol. On August 18, Popov's forces approached Bryansk. The Orlovsky bridgehead of the Germans was eliminated. On this day, Operation Kutuzov officially ended. Three fronts collectively lost 429,890 people killed and wounded, or 11,313 people each.

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century per day of operation. It is possible that these data are incomplete, which will be discussed below.

Due to significant losses (162,407 people), an immediate attack by the Bryansk Front on the city of the same name was impossible. In addition, the rear fell behind, lacking ammunition and fuel. Therefore, Bryansk remained in the hands of the invaders for another month. Attempts to take him began | September, but only on the 17th Soviet troops and partisans entered the city.

"Rumyantsev"

The Belgorod-Kharkov operation "Commander Rumyantsev" was carried out by the troops of the Voronezh Front of Vatutin and Stepanov Konev in cooperation with the South-Western Malinovsky. The balance of power was in favor of the Soviet side. It surpassed the forces of the Wehrmacht in all respects: in terms of personnel by 3.2 times, in terms of tanks and artillery - by 4 times.

On August 3, the operation was started by the e-I and the 6th Guards Armies, having just withstood the brunt of the German offensive, together with the 53rd army of the army, supported by a large number of artillery. They attacked in a sector only 30 km wide. They had to overcome five defensive lines of the Germans between Kursk and Kharkov. After that, the tank armies - | -yaie-ya guards - entered into action. And again, as at Orel, the German defense was beyond the strength of the infantry, and tanks had to be called in. On the third day of the operation, Belgorod was liberated, Soviet tanks were able to penetrate deep into the enemy's defenses. In the following days, Soviet pressure from the flanks became stronger.

At that time, the Germans received reinforcements — divisions from near Orel and from the Donbass, where the Red Army successfully imitated a diversionary offensive. These forces were immediately thrown into a counteroffensive, but they could not do much, except to slow down the advance of the Soviet troops. Stalin in Moscow was nervous and harassed the representatives of the Stavka, but the Soviet steamroller was slowly but inevitably approaching Kharkov. On August 23, Manstein's troops left the long-suffering former capital of Ukraine.

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Here is what Shtemenko writes about that time in his memoirs (Chapter 9):

"In fact, the operation began on August 3, but only on the 5th and 6th, when Tomarovka, Aleksandrovka and Belgorod had already been liberated, the representative of the Stavka, together with the commanders of the Voronezh and Steppe fronts, reported to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief the updated plans for the offensive against each front separately. The headquarters approved them on 6 and 8 August. This, in fact, is the documentary basis of the plan for the operation "Commander Rumyantsev".

Soon both tank armies rushed to the indicated lines. And the Steppe Front, meanwhile, went to the northern and eastern defensive contours of Kharkov. The enemy was in a very difficult position."

Later on, however, the situation developed somewhat unexpectedly. The enemy urgently began to concentrate his reserves (mainly tank divisions) in the battle area, intending to stop our offensive and prevent the thunder of the Kempf task force and the 4th Panzer Army. The command of the Voronezh Front underestimated the impending threat, even, more correctly, overlooked it. The advance of our troops continued without sufficient consolidation of the recaptured lines and without securing the flanks. The enemy took advantage of this and launched powerful counterattacks: on August 11 from the area south of Bogodukhov, and on August 18-20 from the area west of Akhtyrka. In total, up to eleven enemy divisions took part in the counterattacks, mostly tank and motorized. From the direction of Akhtyrka, the enemy aimed at the very base of our deep wedging in the main direction. As a result of fierce fighting on August 17-20, the troops of the Voronezh Front suffered significant losses here. In some places both of our tank armies were pushed to the north. Opportunities to reach the rear of the Kharkov grouping of the enemy deteriorated.

This conclusion was made by A.I. Antonov, reporting the situation to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on the night of August 22 (Shtemenko was present at the same time):

"Sit down and write a directive to Vatutin," Stalin ordered me. "Send a copy to Comrade Zhukov.

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He himself also armed himself with a red pencil and, walking along the table, dictated the first phrase:

"The events of recent days have shown that you have not taken into account the experience of the past and continue to repeat old mistakes both in planning and in conducting operations."

This was followed by a pause - Stalin collected his thoughts. Then, as they say, in one breath, a whole paragraph was dictated:

- "The desire to attack everywhere and to capture the largest possible territory without consolidating success and firmly securing the flanks of shock groups is an offensive of an indiscriminate nature. Such an offensive leads to dissipation of forces and means and enables the enemy to strike at the flank and rear of our groupings that have advanced far ahead and are not secured from the flanks.

The Supreme Commander stopped for a minute, read what was written over my shoulder. At the end of the phrase, he added with his own hand: "and beat them piece by piece." Then the dictation continued:

"Under such circumstances, the enemy managed to reach the rear of the 1st Panzer Army, located in the area of Alekseevka, Kovyagi; then he hit the open flank of the formations of the 6th Guards. armies that reached the line of Otrada, Vyazovaya, Panasovka, and, finally, using your carelessness, the enemy on August 20 struck from the Akhtyrka region to the southeast at the rear of the 27th Army, 4th and 6th Guards . tank corps.

As a result of these actions of the enemy, our troops suffered significant and unjustified losses, and an advantageous position for defeating the Kharkov grouping of the enemy was also lost.

However, I must note that by the time this directive was issued, the situation had already changed, the enemy's counterattack had been beaten off. The actions of the right wing of the Voronezh Front became more organized, and the enemy's attempts to stop our offensive failed.

I.S. was not slow to take advantage of this. Konev. His troops stormed Kharkov. On August 23 at 2] o'clock Moscow saluted the valiant troops of the Steppe Front, who, with the assistance of the Voronezh and Southwestern Fronts, liberated the second

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largest city of Ukraine, twenty artillery volleys of two hundred and twenty-four guns.

With the liquidation of the Kharkov grouping of the enemy, the Battle of Kursk also ended, which marked a new historical stage on the way to our complete victory over Nazi Germany. Ahead was the Dnieper.

Price

Vasilevsky, one of the architects of the Battle of Kursk, assesses its results in the most rosy terms (p. 316):

"..we not only won the great battle, but also grew up in it. Our ideas in developing the plan for the summer campaign came true, we learned to better guess the intentions of the enemy. We had enough will, character, just endurance and nerves not to make a miscalculation, not to start military operations prematurely, not to give the enemy an extra chance. The development of operational strategic tasks was carried out successfully. The skill of command and control of troops at all levels has also increased. In a word, our

military leadership demonstrated both creativity and superiority over military skill
shist command.

In a word, it would be better, but nowhere. It is a little strange that the marshal gave little space to the offensive operations of the battle - less than one page. A gullible reader may think that this is from modesty, so as not to stick out their merits. However, don't be fooled by first impressions.

Vasilevsky did not forget to mention the price of victory:

"As a result of the Battle of Kursk, the Soviet Armed Forces inflicted such a defeat on the enemy from which fascist Germany could never recover. 30 of its divisions were destroyed, including 7 tank divisions. The losses of the German ground forces amounted to more than 500 thousand people, 1500 tanks, 3000 guns, over 3700 combat aircraft. These losses and the failure of the offensive, widely publicized by Nazi propaganda, forced the Nazis to finally go over

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to strategic defense on the entire Soviet-German front. A major defeat on the Kursk salient was the beginning of a deadly crisis for the German army.

The results of the battle are presented in the usual Soviet manner - without mentioning their own losses. But before talking about them, it is worth noting a small roughness. If in the summer of 1943 the enemy received a mortal blow, how did it turn out that the war continued for another two long years, i.e. almost the same as before the start of the Battle of Kursk.

One has only to look at the size of the losses in the glorious Battle of Kursk, as one immediately understands why Vasilevsky and other awarded authors avoided touching on such matters. According to the current official statistics (Krivosheev), the total Soviet losses in the Battle of Kursk amounted to 866,303 people. This applies to three major operations: the Kursk defensive (July 5-23, 1943), the Oryol offensive "Kutuzov" (July 12-August 18) and the Belgorod-Kharkov offensive "Rumyantsev" (August 3-23). This figure includes irretrievable losses (killed, captured, missing) and sanitary (wounded and sick). The average daily losses in the Kursk defensive operation were 9,360; Kutuzov, 11,313; and Rumyantsev, 12,170.

As terrible as these figures are, they are quite possibly underestimated by half. So, at least, says Boris Sokolov:

"The total losses of the Soviet troops during their offensive operations during the Battle of Kursk we calculate approximately in | 360,000 killed, captured, wounded and sick. German losses can be estimated at about 310,000 soldiers and officers (from an estimate of losses over the entire period of the battle of 360,000 people, 40,000 dead, missing and wounded and 10,000 sick - German losses during the attack on Kursk). The loss ratio turns out to be about 4.4:1, i.e. less favorable for the German side than during the attack on Kursk, when it was close to 7:1, especially

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but due to the successful actions of Army Group South under the leadership of Manstein. During the entire battle, Soviet losses reached approximately 1,677,000 killed, captured, wounded and sick, compared with approximately 360,000 for the Wehrmacht.

Afterword to Kursk

As we have seen, in real numbers, the brilliance of the Kursk victory is not so dazzling. There are questions. Was it worth giving the initiative to the enemy for three months? Is Soviet offensive tactics really that flawless when the long-suffering infantry paves the way for the tanks?

Stalin's reaction was far from enthusiastic. During the offensive phases of the Battle of Kursk, he experienced many unpleasant weeks. The model held back three Soviet fronts until [August 7, Manstein did the same with three other fronts until August 23 when he evacuated Kharkov. All this time, the Supreme's nerves were on edge. He, not without reason, feared a repetition of the spring surprise with the German counteroffensive. Here is an interesting illustration from Vasilevsky's memoirs (p. 326). He had to send a detailed report to Headquarters every day. On August 16, he was unable to do this, and the next day he received a telegram from Stalin:

"Marshal Vasilevsky. It is already 3:30 am on August 17, and you have not yet deigned to send a report on the results of the operation for August 16 and on your assessment of the situation to Headquarters. I have long ago obliged you, as a representative of the Headquarters, to send special reports to the Headquarters by the end of each day of the operation. Almost every time you forgot about this duty of yours and did not send reports to Headquarters.

| August 6 is the first day of an important operation on the South-Western Front, where you are authorized by the Headquarters. And now you again deigned to forget about your debt to the Headquarters and do not send reports to the Headquarters.

For the last time, I warn you that if you let your debt to the Headquarters be forgotten even once again, you will be removed from the post of Chief of the General Staff and will be recalled from the front ... "

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The Chief of the General Staff was reprimanded like a boy. The diligent Vasilevsky was shocked: "In all the years of my military service, I have not received even a single small remark or reproach addressed to me."

Since September 1942, Zhukov and Vasilevsky had a certain operational freedom. Now Stalin took them on a short leash. The main reason is that of the five encirclements undertaken during this period, not one succeeded - the last one was during the operation "Kutuzov". In August 1943, encirclements were effectively banned. Stalin revived the way of action of the Civil

Danish war: frontal attacks using cutting blows - to crush the enemy forces and push him back. At the end of August, on a 1,000 km front from Nevel to Taganrog, 8 Soviet fronts delivered 19 parallel blows towards the Dnieper.

In September 1942, the Germans drew up a new plan for the production of tanks and self-propelled guns, according to which, by the spring of 1944, the following monthly production level should be reached (Guderian. Plans, p. 383):

Light reconnaissance tanks "leopard" - 150 pcs. Panther tanks - 600 pcs. Tanks "tiger" - 00pcs. Total tanks - 800 pcs. Assault self-propelled guns - 300 pcs. Light self-propelled guns - 150 pcs. Heavy self-propelled guns - 130 pcs. Super-heavy self-propelled guns - 20 pcs. Total self-propelled guns - 600 pcs.

During a conversation about the Porsche Tiger tank, Hitler stated that he thought the tank, with its electric drive and air-cooled engine, was particularly suitable for use in Africa, but its range needed

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increase from 50 to 150 km. As regards the last requirement, he was undoubtedly right; True, such a requirement should have been put forward already during the discussion of the first design project for this tank.

On the old T-GU tank, the thickness of the frontal armor in the inclined plane was ordered to be increased to 100 mm, the thickness of the frontal armor of the Panther tank was also up to 100 mm. The light reconnaissance tank "leopard" was deleted from the production plan, never entering production, since it "did not correspond in terms of its armor protection and armament to the situation that would develop in 1944." (Guderian. Plans, p. 387). It was decided to install a long-barreled 88-mm gun, frontal armor 150 mm thick, and side armor 80 mm on the Tiger tanks. Tank "mouse" company "Porsche" decided to adopt, increasing the monthly output to 10 pieces. Although this gigantic child of the imagination of Hitler and his retinue did not even exist in the form of a wooden model, nevertheless, it was nevertheless decided to begin mass production by the end of 1943. It was proposed to equip this tank with a 128-mm cannon and, in addition, to study the possibility of installing a 150-mm cannon on it.

To conduct battles in the cities, Hitler ordered the creation of three ram tanks of the "tiger" type based on the running gear of a tank manufactured by Porsche. But these tanks were not released. One can imagine the conduct of battle by the method of chivalrous times with these latest products of the fantasy of strategists-bureaucrats! So that these giants of urban combat could be supplied with sufficient quantities of purified alcohol, an order was issued for the release of special trailers for fuel and additional tanks. Then Hitler demanded the construction of special devices for smoke release, installed on tanks. He also expressed the opinion that the helicopter is most suitable for use in artillery and armored forces.

Finally, the General Staff intervened in the discussion of the deteriorating situation on the tank front, which demanded that the production of all types of tanks be abandoned, with the exception of the tiger tank and the panther tank, which were not yet ready for battle.

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raw production. Hitler was persuaded to agree to this proposal; The Ministry of Arms and Munitions also welcomed the resulting simplification of production. The only thing this group of innovators did not consider was that with the cessation of the production of T-IV tanks, the German ground forces should be limited to 25 Tiger tanks, produced monthly (Guderian. Plans, p. 383).

The consequence of this could be the complete annihilation of the German ground forces in a very short time. The Russians would have played the war without the help of their Western allies and would have captured all of Europe. No power on earth could hold them back. European problems would be solved in a very simplistic way. We would then know what true democracy means.

1944

FABLE "QUARTET ACCORDING TO STALIN"

At the end of February 1944, Vatutin was ambushed by Ukrainian nationalists and seriously wounded, from which he soon died. For three months the 1st Ukrainian Front was commanded by Zhukov, who remained the deputy of the Supreme Commander. In the middle of May, Stalin decided to release him for other assignments and appointed Konev in his place. The post of commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front was therefore vacant. His replacement took place in the usual manner of Stalin - by means of a large transplant. Malinovsky, commander of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, was appointed to replace Konev, and Tolbukhin, commander of the 4th Ukrainian Front, was appointed in his place. No one was appointed to the 4th Ukrainian, the front was abolished, though not for long. In October it was recreated with Petrov at its head.

First of all, the immortal dialogue from the film "Fanfan-Tulip" comes to mind (I quote from memory): "We will put the left flank on the right. - And right to left? No, right to center. It was in Stalin's blood to constantly shuffle cadres, to transfer them from place to place, so that they would not sit up and take deep roots. For the Bolsheviks, this became part of the party culture. Hence the song "An order was given to him to the west, to her - in the other direction." The inspired transfer of commanders continued throughout the war. Thus, in the South-Western and Southern directions, front commanders were appointed 18 times, although there were only 12 of them. Timoshenko, Eremenko, Malinovsky were appointed three times, Rokossovsky two times.

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TEN BEATS, OR YOU GO SILENT - YOU WILL FURTHER

In the memory of many, including my generation, 1944 immediately evokes associations - ten Stalinist strikes. The term and epithet appeared after the war, when everything significant in our life was attributed to the leader, for example, Stalin's plan for the transformation of nature. Of course, strikes are an a posteriori grouping of operations in 1944;

use. I have given a summary of famous strikes, retaining as much as possible the Soviet terminology. Added losses according to Krivosheev.

First hit

Modern name: LENINGRAD-NOVGOROD STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE OPERATION.

January 4 - [March 1944]

Leningrad, Volkhov and 2nd Baltic Fronts in cooperation with the Baltic Fleet. The goal is to defeat the German group near Leningrad and Novgorod. By February 29, the blockade of Leningrad was lifted. Soviet losses (Krivosheev): total - 313 953, average daily - 6541.

Second strike

DNIPRO-CARPATHIAN STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE OPERATION (Liberation of the Right-Bank Ukraine).

December 24, 1943 - April 17, 1944

Troops 1, 2, Zi of the 4th Ukrainian fronts defeated the German army groups "South" and A on the Southern Bug River, throwing their remnants beyond the Dniester. The entire Right-Bank Ukraine was liberated. Soviet troops reached the line of Kovel, Ternopil, Chernovtsy, Balti, advanced to the approaches to southern Poland and Czechoslovakia, and on March 28, having crossed the Prut River, entered Romania. For the first time during the war, hostilities were transferred outside the Soviet Union. Soviet losses (Krivosheev): total - 1,109,528, daily average - 9,565.

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third strike

Two operations: Odessa (March 28-April 16, its statistics are included in the second strike) and Crimean (April 8-May 12). The troops of the 3rd and 4th Ukrainian Fronts and the Separate Primorsky Army, in cooperation with the 2nd Ukrainian Front and the Black Sea Fleet, defeated the Odessa and Crimean groups of the 17th German Army. Soviet losses in the Crimean operation (Krivosheev): total - 84,819, average daily - 2,423.

fourth strike

VYBORGSK-PETROZAVODSK STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE OPERATION

June 10 - August 9, 1944

Leningrad and Karelian fronts. The Finnish army was defeated, the cities of Vyborg, Petrozavodsk and most of the Karelian-Finnish SSR were liberated. Soviet losses (Krivosheev): total - 96,375, average daily - 4,047.

Fifth strike

BELARUSIAN STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE OPERATION BAGRATION

June 23 - August 29, 1944

The troops of the 1st Baltic, 1st, 2nd and 3rd Belorussian fronts defeated the German Army Group Center and destroyed 30 enemy divisions east of Minsk. Belarus, most of Lithuania and a significant part of Poland were liberated. Soviet troops crossed the Neman and reached the Vistula and directly to the borders of Germany. Soviet losses (Krivosheev): total - 765,815, average daily - 11,262.

Sixth strike

LVOV-SANDOMIRSK STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE OPERATION

July 13 - August 29, 1944

1st Ukrainian Front. Soviet troops defeated the German grouping near Lvov and threw back its remnants behind

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rivers San and Vistula. Western Ukraine was liberated: Soviet troops crossed the Vistula and formed a bridgehead west of Sandomierz. Soviet losses (Krivosheev): total - 289,296, average daily - 6027.

Seventh strike

YASSIAN-CHISINAU STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE OPERATION

August 20-29, 1944

2nd and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts in cooperation with the Black Sea Fleet and the Danube Military Flotilla in the Chisinau-Iasi region. The group of German-Romanian troops was defeated, the Moldavian SSR was liberated and the allies were withdrawn from the war.

Germany - Romania, and then Bulgaria. The way is open for Soviet troops to Hungary and the Balkans. Soviet losses (Krivosheev): total - 67,130, daily average - 6,713.

eighth strike

BALTIC STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE OPERATION

[September 4 - November 24, 1944

Leningrad, |, 2nd and 3rd Baltic Fronts and the Baltic Fleet. More than 30 German divisions were defeated in the Baltics. Estonia and most of Latvia liberated; Finland was withdrawn from the war. Soviet losses (Krivosheev): total - 280 090, average daily - 3890.

Ninth impact

EASTERN-CARPATHIA STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE OPERATION (September 8 - October 28, 1944) and BELGRADE STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE OPERATION (September 28 - October 20, 1944).

Offensive operations of the 4th, 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts of the Soviet Army in the northern part of the Carpathians, between the Tisza and Danube rivers, and in the eastern part of Yugoslavia. The German army groups "South" and "F" were defeated, most of

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territories of Hungary and Transcarpathian Ukraine, Hungary withdrew from the war. Soviet losses (Krivosheev): total - 145,049, average daily - 2475 (East Carpathian) and 819 (Belgrade).

Tenth strike

PETSAMO-KIRKENESS STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE OPERATION.

/—October 29, 1944

The troops of the Karelian Front and the ships of the Northern Fleet defeated the 20th mountain German army in Northern Finland, liberated the Pechenga region and eliminated the threat to the port of Murmansk. Soviet troops occupied Pechenga on October 15, crossed the Kirkenes-Rovaniemi highway on October 23, cleared the entire region of nickel mines, and on October 25 entered Norway. Soviet losses (Krivosheev): total - 21,233, average daily - 923.

The general victorious tone of the summary cannot hide some sad facts. Strikes two and five, the liberation of the Right-Bank Ukraine and Belorussia, cost the Red Army extremely dear: it lost 1,875,000 men, including 450,000 killed. In 1944, the Soviet generals were mainly advancing, but they knew how to do it in only one way - in bulk, leaving behind mountains of corpses of their own soldiers. The average daily losses in these two operations totaled more than 20,000 per day.

Within the framework of the so-called. The second strike was the Korsun-Shevchenkovsky operation, which became a textbook. Zhukov is considered its author. He proposed that the troops of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian Fronts surround 6 enemy divisions located on a 60-kilometer ledge between two Soviet bridgeheads. Stalin, who, as we know, banned encirclements in 1943, made an exception this time. By February 3, the troops of Vatutin and Konev encircled 54,000 Germans in a double ring, but by the 17th, 30,000 of them managed to escape from the cauldron. Even earlier, on February 12, Stalin, dissatisfied with Zhukov's inactivity, transferred the functions of coordinating the two fronts to Konev. Despite the departure of more than half of those surrounded, mark the operation

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whether salutes and awards. Konev became a marshal. Stalin, it seems, after this did not change his negative attitude towards the environment.

Hitler, for his part, did not sit idle either. On March 30, he summoned the commanders of Army Groups A and South, Kleist and Manstein. Both received the Iron Cross 2nd Class (Knight's Cross) at the same time as the notice that the Fuhrer no longer needed their services. The grand masters of operational art were replaced by the generals of the Zhukovsky plan, whose main advantage was that they knew how to squeeze the maximum degree of resistance out of the troops. Manstein's army group was led by Model, Kleist by Schöörner. Both received field marshal's batons.

The fifth and sixth strikes, which posed a serious threat to German territory, ended in early August, but did not continue in 1944. The fronts of Rokossovsky and Konev were stuck in Poland for a long time, where they were generally passive. The standard explanation is that the troops were tired, out of supply and in need of reinforcements. However, as many as three fronts, the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Ukrainian fronts, continued to advance at that time. True, not on Warsaw and Berlin, but on Romania and the Balkans (strike seven and ninth). We are told that they were driven there by fraternal feelings for the peoples of the region and, above all, by an important strategic resource, Romanian oil. Alas, all this is a smokescreen. Romanian oil has not yet been discovered in Bulgaria, Hungary and Yugoslavia. In the defeat of Germany, except for Hitler, no one else doubted, especially after the landing in Normandy. Stalin, instead of ending the war, was in a hurry to seize more territories in Eastern Europe.

In general, the strategy of 1944 leaves the feeling that Stalin was in no hurry to end the war. There seem to be two reasons for this. One is the desire to capture more neighboring countries, the second is the strategic literalism of the leader. He believed that in order to win, it was necessary to defeat every enemy grouping, no matter where it was. Again, as before, we observe a dispersion of forces. There are absolutely no attempts to inflict a mortal blow on the enemy in the most vulnerable place. In the main strategic direction, the Soviet troops

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The ska stood in place for a good five months, from early August to early January.

The prolongation of the war bears incalculable burdens for the population. Stalin and the Bolshevik elite were not interested in this. Let the Soviet people tighten their belts. The army could continue to live on American food.

UPRISING IN WARSAW. 1 AUGUST - 2 OCTOBER

Operation "Bagration" - the forty-first year on the contrary

At the end of July, the Headquarters ordered Rokossovsky (1st Belorussian Front) and Konev (1st Ukrainian Front) to cross the Vistula in a two hundred-kilometer strip from a point south of Warsaw to the mouth. The Vistula cannot be classified as a very serious water obstacle - the width of the river is only 200 m and the depth is not more than 2 m.

In Rokossovsky's farm, the 2nd Panzer Army broke through to the Warsaw suburb of Praga and | August tried to seize the railway bridge. On July 28, the advanced units of Rokossovsky occupied two bridgeheads on the western bank of the Vistula.

Hitler forced the German troops to stand still, despite the overwhelming superiority of the enemy. He referred to the danger of Finland withdrawing from the war. On July 29, a German communiqué reported that the Russians had launched a general attack on Warsaw from the southwest.

On July 31, the troops of the right flank of the 1st Belorussian Front started fighting on the near approaches to Prague (a suburb of Warsaw) on the right bank of the Vistula; meanwhile, the troops of the left flank crossed the Vistula south of Warsaw and captured plandarmes in the areas of the cities of Magnuszew and Pulawy. (Bÿp:// geyoyop.apie\$.gy/B15{org/0000342_0.pt1)

There was talk in Moscow that on August 9 or 10 Rokossovsky would take Warsaw. The military-political situation gave Rokossovsky great chances to take the Polish capital on the move. This, obviously, was the main goal of the offensive of the 1st Belorussian Front, because Warsaw lay on the shortest route of the Soviet troops to the center of Germany. Guderian jav

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but believed that the Soviet troops would try to capture Warsaw in the first week of August. The Russians were favored by a number of factors. The German garrison in Warsaw consisted of only about 5,000 men, including officials. Moreover, the invaders were demoralized. The catastrophe on the Central Front painfully affected the condition of the Warsaw garrison. And in the 20th of July, the Germans were seized by panic, which was explained not only by the rapid advance of Rokossovsky's armies, but also by the uncertainty of the situation in Germany itself in connection with the assassination attempt on Hitler on July 20th. These days, most of the attack aircraft and the Gestapo fled from Warsaw (Aleksiev V. Warsaw uprising. SGB., 1999, pp. 78, 79).

At the same time, there were about 40,000 "Akovtsy" militants (supporters of the Home Army) in the city, plus paramilitary detachments (up to two thousand people) of the pro-Soviet People's Army (it seems that it was not by chance that Stalin appointed the commander of the 1st Belorussian Front Pole Rokossovsky).

On July 29, the Kosciuszko radio station broadcast an appeal calling for an uprising in Warsaw. This fact was confirmed by Rokossovsky in an interview with the English journalist A. Werth. Werth mentions calls for an uprising in the book Russia in the War 1941-1945 (Moscow, 1967, p. 645).

Insurrection

| August in Warsaw, an uprising of the Home Army (AK) broke out under the leadership of Bur-Komorowski.

AK was subordinate to the Polish government in exile in London, whose head, Mikołajczyk, was at that time in Moscow. Undoubtedly, the AK wanted to capture Warsaw before the arrival of the Red Army, which would have strengthened Mikołajczyk's position in negotiations with Stalin.

The Kremlin, for its part, was banking on its client in Polynia, the communist government in Lublin. At the same time, he wanted to avoid a situation where the Red Army would have to fight the Polish patriots from AK. Although in July Soviet planes dropped leaflets calling for an uprising in German-occupied Poland, and on the 29th Radio Moscow urged Warsaw residents to take up arms, AK meanwhile launched an uprising without notifying the Soviet side. True, June 31

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Mikołajczyk remarked to Molotov in passing: "The Polish government is considering a plan for a general uprising in Warsaw and asks the Soviet government to bomb the airfields around the city." The Kremlin pretended not to understand the vague hint.

The Warsaw insurgents fought heroically, but were poorly armed and even worse organized. The Red Army was in no hurry to storm Warsaw. The official explanation was and remains this: the fronts of Rokossovsky and Konev broke away from their sources of supply, the troops needed rest. There is a good deal of truth in this, but at the same time, Chuikov's 8th Guards Army crossed the Vistula at Magnuszew, 25 kilometers south of Warsaw. On August 2, three Polish divisions of Berling's army, which were part of Rokossovsky's front, crossed the Wisluu Pulawy and Demblin - again not near Warsaw, 60 km south of it. All these troops could, if desired, be thrown to the aid of the insurgent Polish capital.

But time passed, and the Russians did not appear. It was a death sentence for the rebels. The fact that they held out for so long, more than two months, was due to unusual circumstances.

K. Tippelskirch says about the rebels: "In the beginning, their successes were stunning: most of the German military and civilian institutions located in this large city were cut off from the outside world; the train stations are occupied by insurgents with mortars, 20 mm anti-aircraft guns and anti-tank weapons; the highways of the city are blocked. Only the bridges over the Vistula were held. If the Russians continued to attack the bridgehead, the position of the German troops in the city would become hopeless "(K. Tippelskirch. History of the Second World War. M., [956, p. 452).

Pole Rokossovsky, who lived and worked in Prague in his youth, found himself in an intolerable situation.

The tragedy that unfolded in Warsaw did not give rest. The realization that it was impossible to undertake a major operation in order to rescue the rebels was painful (Rokossovsky K.K.: Soldier's duty, pp. 280-281).

Before his eyes, the massacres of Poles and the barbaric destruction of the city took place. Stalin was not accidentally appointed

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urged the Pole to liberate Warsaw, most likely to soften the negative reaction to Katyn. At the same time, Rokossovsky was, of course, completely dependent on his Supreme [Commander-in-Chief. It is difficult to say what was going on inside him, but reading the memoirs of the marshal leaves an unpleasant aftertaste. He wants to give the reader the impression that the leaders of the uprising were provocateurs and German puppets (Rokossovsky K.K. Soldier's duty, p. 277):

It would seem that in this situation the Warsaw insurgents could try to seize the bridges across the Vistula and capture Prague, striking the enemy from the rear. In this way, they would have helped the troops of the 2nd Panzer Army, and who knows how things would have played out then. But this did not enter into the calculations of the London Polish government, three of whose representatives were in Warsaw, nor into the calculations of Generals Boer and Monter. They did their dirty work and left, and the people provoked by them paid for everything.

Marshal Chuikov in his memoirs adheres to the same line regarding the Home Army (p. 43):

"They did not fight the Germans, and they, in turn, did not touch them. British Prime Minister Churchill made sure that this army was formed, equipped and thrown into Poland, but not in order to avenge their country and fight the occupiers, but only for show.

This quotation is given in a reverse translation from English, since there is no corresponding place in a separate edition of Chuikov's book. This propaganda masterpiece, it seems, was in a magazine version (October, 1965).

At the end of September, a representative of the Stavka Zhukov arrived in the Warsaw region. In his memoirs, he adheres to the official lie (vol. 2, pp. 250-251):

"I established that our troops did everything in their power to help the rebels, although, I repeat, the uprising was in no way coordinated with the Soviet command.

All the time - before and after the forced withdrawal of our troops - the 1st Belorussian Front continued to provide assistance to the rebels, dropping food, medicines and ammunition from aircraft. In the Western press, I remember, on this occasion,

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There were many false reports that misled public opinion.

S. Mikolajczyk in the book "Ware oh! Rołapa" called the further actions (more precisely, inaction) of Stalin and Rokossovsky "Russian betrayal". According to Mikolajczyk (and a number of Western historians), the Russians could easily take Warsaw at that time and did not do this for purely political reasons: Stalin was not satisfied with the liberation of the Polish capital as a result of a popular uprising led by Count Bur-Komorowski and other "agents" of the London government. Mikolajczyk used the following facts in his argument. The Soviet command did not allow British and American planes, which delivered weapons and ammunition from the west and dropped weapons and ammunition in Warsaw, to land on Soviet airfields.

The Soviet troops did not support the courageous attempt of the Polish units under the command of General Berling to cross the Vistula in close proximity to Warsaw (on September 16-19, up to six infantry battalions crossed the Vistula; on September 23, under the onslaught of superior enemy forces, the Poles, having suffered heavy losses, were forced were to return to the east coast).

Letters exchanged between Stalin and Churchill during the Warsaw Uprising bear the marks of Churchill's growing irritation at Russian non-cooperation and Stalin's growing anger towards the Warsaw "criminals". As Churchill writes, Vyshinsky informed the American ambassador that the Soviet government was opposed to the landing of British and American aircraft on its territory "because the Soviet government does not want to have any direct or indirect connection with the Warsaw adventure." On August 22, Stalin wrote to Churchill: "Sooner or later, the truth about a handful of criminals who started the Warsaw adventure in order to seize power will become known to everyone. These people ... threw many almost unarmed people under the German guns, tanks, aircraft ... "

The case, however, dragged on, and the Kremlin leader changed tactics. On September 10, the 47th Army, together with the Poles of Berling, broke into Prague and captured it by the 14th. By this time

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neither the forces of the rebels were running out. Soviet planes began to drop food and ammunition on them, but Soviet cartridges were of little use, since AK mainly used weapons captured from the Germans. Polish units from Berling's army crossed into the city. Soviet sources name up to 6 battalions, the Germans from the 9th Army counted

several companies that did not take decisive action after the landing. In any case, the untrained Polish peasants, forcibly drafted into the army, did not pose a serious threat to the German units. The Soviet troops did not actually come to their aid, and a week later the Poles were sent back. Two Soviet liaison officers with radio stations were thrown to Bur-Komorovsky, but their messages remained unanswered. In the future, the Soviet troops watched indifferently across the narrow Vistula as the Germans dealt with the rebels.

Hitler did not allow the use of Wehrmacht troops for street fighting. The Germans brought in remote-controlled building demolition vehicles, rocket-propelled grenades, and artillery, including a giant 24-inch (609.6 mm) howitzer. The Fuhrer placed the responsibility for suppressing the uprising on Himmler. He, in turn, entrusted the operation to General Bach-Zelewsky, who had at his disposal 12 SS police companies and two special brigades - Kaminsky and Dirlwanger.

Bronisław Kaminsky, a Pole by father and a German by mother, posing as a Russian, a former communist and political prisoner, proclaimed himself the Fuhrer of the Russian National Socialist Party. In 1942-1943. he was the head of the Lokot volost in the Oryol (now Bryansk) region. This territory was called the Lokot Republic. Kaminsky formed, mainly from Soviet prisoners of war, a brigade of 10,000 men, which he called RONA (Russian People's Liberation Army); in 1944 she was included in the SS troops.

In the Dirlwanger brigade, the personnel, apart from officers and some other personnel, were recruited in concentration camps - mostly from criminals, Oscar Dirlwanger, an alcoholic, once expelled from the SS for moral decay, a hut

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sting of the court-martial only thanks to the patronage of Himmler.

Both of these brigades and the SS police behaved in Warsaw with unheard-of cruelty. Civilians, mostly women and children, were used as human shields in attacks against insurgents. Hospital patients without distinction of sex and age were taken out of buildings and shot. Rape and murder of all kinds, including the slitting of throats, were daily occurrences. At the same time, tactical results for a long time remained not very impressive.

Guderian, who had just been appointed Chief of the General Staff, did not seem to be delighted with what was happening in Warsaw - at least that is what he writes in his memoirs (p. 489):

"SS units that participated in the suppression of the uprising, which, by the way, did not belong to the Waffen SS, did not differ in discipline. Kaminsky's brigade consisted of former prisoners of war, mainly Russians, who were hostile to the Poles; the Dirlwanger brigade consisted of German criminals who had to atone for their guilt. When these dubious elements were forced to wage fierce battles for life and death for every street, for every house in the city, their morale was not strong enough. Von dem Bach himself informed me of the atrocities of his subordinates, which he was unable to stop. His message made my hair stand on end. That same evening I reported everything to Hitler and demanded that both of these brigades be removed from the Eastern Front. At first, Hitler did not agree. But when even Himmler's liaison officer, SS Brigadeführer Fegelein, confirmed my words: "That's right, my Fuhrer, they really are real scum!", the Fuhrer had no choice but to accept my offer. Von dem Bach saw to it that Kaminsky was shot; thus he got rid of an undesirable witness.

At the end of September, Bur-Komorowski considered that further resistance was impossible and sent parliamentarians to the Germans. On October 2, he signed a surrender to the representatives of the Wehrmacht. The end of the Warsaw tragedy is known: in 63 days of fighting, about 250,000 Poles died. When, on January 17, 1945, Soviet troops finally entered Warsaw,

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the clan was actually destroyed to the foundations (Vert A. Russia in the war 1941-1945. M., 1967, pp. 630-645; Klishko 3. Warsaw uprising. M., 1969). The rebels lost 18,000 dead and 6,000 seriously wounded; 15 thousand were taken prisoner. Not German losses were about 10 thousand people.

The process of punishing the rebellious city continued for another three and a half months, because the Soviet troops took Warsaw only in mid-January 1945. The Germans evicted all the inhabitants from the city - according to various estimates, from 350 to 550 thousand, after which they began a systematic destruction of the Polish capital, block by block. Of the evicted residents, approximately 90 thousand ended up in concentration camps and death camps. Warsaw as a city ceased to exist, by the time the Germans left, 85% of the buildings lay in ruins. A considerable number of surviving houses were destroyed by Soviet heavy artillery.

All this happened in front of K.K. Rokossovsky and, no doubt, added scars to his heart. He did not even have a chance to rehabilitate himself before himself when at the Headquarters his plan for an offensive operation, which provided for the liberation of Warsaw, was finally approved. Again, as often happened in the fate of Konstantin Konstantinovich, big politics intervened in the matter.

Political games

The Warsaw Uprising took place at the intersection of political and ideological ambitions. The Home Army and the London government made an attempt to seize the Polish capital at lightning speed in order to confront the approaching Red Army with a fact. They did not warn Moscow in advance about the upcoming performance, and Stalin had a strong trump card in his hands. At first he could pretend that nothing was happening, then he declared the rebels to be a bunch of criminals and accomplices of the Germans. Only a month and a half later, the Soviet side made sluggish attempts to help the rebels, even allowing Allied aircraft to land at Ukrainian airfields. By this time, Bur-Komorowski's position was hopeless. Hitler, for his part, saw in the uprising a good chance, firstly, to destroy the hated Polish capital, and secondly, to teach a lesson to all the occupied

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other countries. The operation dragged on, but Warsaw was still destroyed.

One should not think that Stalin, if he had received information in advance about the impending uprising, would have helped the AK. All non-communist forces in Poland were considered by the Soviet leader as hostile to the interests of the USSR. A couple of weeks before the uprising near Vilnius, such an episode took place. The commander of the 3rd Belorussian Front, General Chernyakhovsky, invited local Polish leaders and officers of the Home Army to a friendly meeting. All these Poles disappeared without a trace. Later, Zhukov used a similar tactic.

On March 27, 1945, the commander of the Home Army Leopold Okulicki and other leaders of non-communist Poland met with Soviet representatives. The invitation was sent back in February on Stalin's behalf by NKVD General Serov, who under the surname Ivanov was an adviser to the Polish Ministry of Security. The goal is to agree on their entry into the Polish pro-Soviet government. They arrived on the outskirts of Warsaw, Pruszk, having security guarantees from the commander of the 1st Belorussian Front, Zhukov.

Okulitsky did not want to go to this meeting, foreseeing a repetition of what happened near Vilnius. He had to agree as a result of a direct order from the Deputy Prime Minister of the London government, Stanislaw Yankovsky. Expectations did not deceive the Polish general. As soon as 16 prominent Poles gathered in Pruszkow, they were seized and sent by plane to Moscow. After months of intense interrogation and torture, they were charged. They, as established by the NKVD:

collaborated with the Germans;

conducted espionage and sabotage in the rear of the Red Army;

prepared a military alliance with Nazi Germany;

had a radio transmitter;

characterized the liberation of Poland as a new occupation,

disbanded the Home Army in order to continue the fight against the USSR

The Trial of the Sixteen took place in Moscow on June 18-21, 1945, in the presence of the foreign press and observers from England and the USA. For this reason, the sentences were unacceptably lenient by Soviet standards. Three people excuse

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Li, five defendants received 4 months in prison, one - 6, one - 8, one - [2, one - 18. Interior Minister Adam Bien and his deputy Stanislav Yasyukovich were sentenced to 5 years. The two main defendants were less fortunate. Oku Litsky was given 10 years, but at the end of 1946 he was killed in Butyrki. Yankovsky, who received 8 years, died in prison in 1953, two weeks before the end of his term; he might have been dealt with too.

STALIN TAKES CONTROL

We read from Zhukov (vol. 2, p. 252):

"In early October, I arrived in the 47th Army of General F.I. Perkhovich, which led offensive battles between Modlin and Warsaw. This army, advancing on the flat terrain, suffered heavy losses and was in an extremely overworked and weakened state. The situation was no better in the neighboring 70th Army, which fought in the Serock-Pultusk sector.

I did not understand the operational purpose of this offensive, which greatly exhausted our troops. K.K. Rokossovsky agreed with me, but, according to him, the Supreme Commander demanded the withdrawal of the 47th Army to the Vistula in the Modlin-Warsaw sector and the expansion of bridgeheads on the Narew River.

Calling I.V. Stalin and reporting the situation, I asked his permission to stop offensive battles on the sector of the 1st Belorussian Front, since they were futile, and give the order for the troops of the right wing of the 1st Belorussian Front and the left wing of the 2nd Belorussian Front to go on the defensive to give them rest and replenishment.

"Fly tomorrow with Rokossovsky to Headquarters, we'll talk on the spot," the Supreme Commander replied. - Goodbye.

Before I could answer, he hung up.

In the afternoon of the next day, K.K. and I Rokossovsky were at Headquarters.

In addition to the Supreme, there were A.I. Antonov, V.M. Molotov, 1.1. Beria and G.M. Malenkov.

Just in case, we check the Journal of visits to Stalin. The first suitable date when Zhukov and Rokossovsky were together was November 7th. In addition to them were present: Molotov,

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Beria, Malenkov, Vasilevsky, Konev, Antonov and Shtemenko. party leaders appeared 15 minutes earlier than the military men — at 23.00, and left 30 minutes later.

According to Zhukov, the continuation was like this:

"The next day, the Supreme called me and asked dryly:

- What do you think about transferring the leadership of all fronts to the Headquarters in the future?

I understood that he meant to abolish the representatives of the Headquarters for coordinating the fronts, and I felt that this idea arose not only as a result of our dispute yesterday.

The war was coming to an end, it remained to carry out several final operations, and I.V. Stalin probably wanted to be at the head of these operations alone.

"Yes, the number of fronts has decreased," I answered. - The length of the common front has also been reduced, the management of the fronts has been simplified, and there is a full opportunity to control the fronts directly from the Headquarters.

Are you saying this without offense?

- And what is there to be offended by? I think that Vasilevsky and I will not remain unemployed," I joked.

On the evening of the same day, the Supreme Commander called me to his office and said:

— The 1st Belorussian Front is on the Berlin direction. We are thinking of putting you in this direction, and we will appoint Rokossovsky to another front.

I replied that I was ready to command any front, but I noticed that K.K. Rokossovsky will hardly be pleased if he is released from the Belorussian Front.

"You will continue to be my deputy," said I.V. Stalin. - As for insults - we are not red girls. I'll talk to Rokossovsky now.

I.V. Stalin, in my presence, announced his decision and asked him if he had any objection to moving to the 2nd Belorussian Front.

K.K. Rokossovsky asked why such disgrace. And he asked me to leave him on the 1st Belorussian Front.

"We decided to put Zhukov in the main Berlin direction," said I.V. Stalin - and you will have to accept the 2nd Belorussian Front.

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"Yes, Comrade Stalin," answered K.K. Rokossovsky.

An impartial journal registered Zhukov's visit 3 days later, on November 11, together with Beria, Malenkov, Molotov, Voronov, Fedorenko, Yakovlev, Novikov, Antonov and Shtemenko. In the memoirs, Zhukov and Rokossovsky talk to the leader; in the journal, the event looks more like a conference. Rokossovsky, by the way, was not present. At the same time, Beria and Malenkov appeared at 22.50, all the rest 5 minutes later. Novikov, Voronov, Yakovlev and Fedorenko left at 23.09, after 5 minutes Molotov left the office. The rest of the military remained with Stalin until 1.35; At 1.45 Beria and Malenkov left. Once again, Zhukov misleads the reader by trying to give the impression that his contacts with Stalin were closer than they actually were.

1945

BIG PICTURE

The Berlin epic is striking in its scale, it was a grand massacre. In a small space near the German capital, three and a half million people, armed to the teeth, met in a deadly battle: 52 thousand guns and mortars, about 8 thousand tanks and self-propelled guns, 11 thousand aircraft. The superior forces were on the Soviet side: two and a half million soldiers, 41,600 guns and mortars, 6,250 tanks and 7,500 aircraft. Stalin could be proud that he threw more equipment into this battle than Hitler did on the entire Eastern Front in June 1941 (Beur, p. 147).

The Soviet attack on Berlin, strange as it may sound, took Hitler by surprise. At that time, he paid all his attention to the counter-offensive in the Ardennes, even transferred his Headquarters to Zigenberg. On January 9, Guderian arrived there to report on intelligence about the impending Russian offensive and to ask for reinforcements. He laid out before the Führer maps and diagrams showing the unfavorable balance of forces in this section of the front. In his report, he said that, according to aerial photographs provided by General Seidemann of the Luftwaffe, there were 8,000 Soviet aircraft on the Vistula and in East Prussia. Then a remarkable scene took place (see Egewas van Goppowowen, pp. 125-126). Goering interrupted the Chief of the General Staff and slammed his fist on the map: "Don't believe him, my Fuhrer, the Russians don't have that many planes anymore, they're dummies." He was immediately supported by Keitel: "The Reichsmarschall is absolutely right!" Beside himself with anger, Hitler called the intelligence reports "completely idiotic" and threatened to put those who compiled them in a madhouse. Guderian replied that it was

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about General Gehlen, one of the best officers of the General Staff. If he is put under lock and key, he will join him. Guderian received no reinforcements. In a certain sense, the German leadership, in its unwillingness to reckon with the facts, competed with the Kremlin in the spring of 1941. Three days later, a grandiose Soviet offensive began, in which more than 2 million troops took part.

The story of how the plan of the Berlin operation was formed by the Soviet command and how it developed is not simple and has not been completely unraveled to this day. Nevertheless, it is worth doing.

Two operations

In essence, there was not one Berlin operation, but two. The first is now officially called the Vistula-Oder strategic operation, which, in turn, consisted of two front-line operations - Warsaw-Poznan (Zhukov's 1st Belorussian Front) and Sandomierz-Silesian (1st Ukrainian Front) ; time frame - January 12 - February 3, 1945. The second operation is the actual assault on Berlin, or the Berlin strategic operation, the same two fronts, time - [April 6 - May 8, 1945. There is a deliberate reticence in this chronology . At the end of January, the Headquarters suddenly saw that the fronts of Zhukov and Konev were only 60-70 km from the German capital. The temptation to capture her with one blow was natural and irresistible. Stalin ordered the commanders to prepare for this final act of the war. In the future, they tried to rewrite this segment of history, but traces remained. Here is one that is very unambiguous. [General Shtemenko, at that time the head of the Operational Directorate of the General Staff, writes (vol. 1, pp. 221-222):

"On January 6, 1945, the General Staff received the decision of the Commander of the Belorussian Front on an essentially non-stop offensive up to the capture of the German capital. In four days it was supposed to bring up troops, especially artillery, gather rear areas, replenish combat supplies, put in order the material part of tank formations, introduce the 3rd shock army and the |

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Polsky, in order to continue the offensive on February 1-2 with all the forces of the front. The immediate task is to cross the Oder on the move. The next one is a blow to Berlin. At the same time, the 2nd Guards Tank Army was supposed to cover it from the northwest, and the 1st from the northeast.

A day later, the decision of the Commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front arrived. He, too, intended to act without noticeable pause. It was planned to continue the offensive on February 5-6 and to reach the Elbe on February 25-28, and to capture Berlin with the right wing in cooperation with the Belorussian Front.

The same point of view was held by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. On February 4, 1945, at the well-known Yalta Conference, as Winston Churchill recalls, he gave a very optimistic assessment of the situation, noting that the enemy's front had been broken through and the Germans were only filling up the holes.

Consequently, the opinions of all agreed on one thing - it is necessary to continue the unceasing offensive and take control of Berlin. The fronts received the necessary instructions in this regard from Moscow and, in turn, assigned tasks to the armies.

Until the beginning of February, everything was going well, but then there was a hitch that lasted more than 2 months: | On February 1945, the troops of the 5th shock army, and after it the 8th guards armies of the 1st Belorussian Front, made a throw to the western bank of the Oder and part of the forces captured small bridgeheads in the area of the Kustrin fortress. The fortress itself remained, however, in the hands of the enemy. To the south, the 69th Army entered the Oder, in the zone of which, near Frankfurt, the Germans, in turn, held a bridgehead. The 33rd Army also reached the Oder. This was followed by a small gap, and then the neighboring 1st Ukrainian Front took up positions along the Oder with a ledge to the south.

At this line, the Soviet troops were stopped.

After reading the expression "were stopped", the reader expects to be told by whom - by the Headquarters, by the enemy, or, who knows, maybe by a heavenly sign. Shtemenko reports an unfavorable operational situation instead of a direct answer. The 1st Belorussian Front, which suffered heavy losses, did not have enough forces for the last push, there were not enough ammunition and other supplies. The gap with the 2nd Belorussian on the right flank was very large and

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sintered. Zhukov was forced to besiege Poznań and Kustrin and also to liquidate enemy forces in Eastern Pomerania. All these circumstances really took place, but one cannot get rid of the impression that after all there was also an order to suspend the offensive. Nothing was known about this order for a long time, but two decades after the events

the situation has changed.

In 1964, the magazine Oktyabr (Nos. 3-5) published the memoirs of Vasily Chuikov, who during the Berlin operation commanded the 8th Guards Army as part of the Belorussian Front; they were later published in the journal New and Contemporary History, 1965, No. 2. There was such a sensational statement:

"Berlin could have been taken already in February. And this, of course, would hasten the end of the war."

According to Chuikov, the first attack on Berlin was stopped by Stalin, and Zhukov did not dare to object to him:

"On February 4, the commander of the 1st Belorussian Front gathered for a meeting at the headquarters of the 69th Army, where he himself arrived, commanders Berzarin, Kolpakchi, Katukov, Bogdanov and me. We were already sitting at the tables, discussing the plan of attack on Berlin, when the phone rang on the HF unit. I sat almost nearby and heard the conversation on the phone well. Stalin called. He asked Zhukov where he was and what he was doing. The marshal replied that he had gathered the army commanders at the headquarters of Kolpakchi's army and was working with them on planning an attack on Berlin.

After listening to the report, Stalin suddenly, quite unexpectedly, as I understood it, demanded for the front commander to stop this planning and start working together with Rokossovsky on the development of an operation to defeat the Nazi troops of the Vistula Army Group located in Pomerania.

Zhukov, after listening to Stalin's order, said goodbye to those present and left. Chuikov then expresses his emotions (reverse translation from English):

"To this day I cannot understand why Marshal Zhukov, the first deputy of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, who knew perfectly well the real state of affairs, did not try to convince Stalin of the need to go to Berlin, and not to East Po

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measure. Moreover, he was not alone in his opinion, he knew well what mood was among the soldiers and officers. Why did he so humbly agree with Stalin?

It was a hundred megaton bomb. The disgraced Zhukov was furious, but there was little he could do but send a complaint to Khrushchev. Interestingly, Chuikov's career ended around the same time. At the time of publication, he held three positions: Deputy Minister of Defense, Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces and Head of the Civil Defense of the USSR. Already in June, he lost his first two titles. Whether this was due to the noise around the memoirs is hard to say.

After Khrushchev was ousted in October 1964, Zhukov got the opportunity to express his opinion, first in the Military Historical Journal (1965, No. 6), then in voluminous memoirs. Zhukov's objections are very long and not entirely consistent, but some are worth reading. In particular, he writes (p. 278):

"But there was no such meeting on February 4 at the headquarters of the 69th Army. Therefore, a conversation on HF with I.V. Stalin, about whom V.I. Chuikov was also not there.

Zhukov at the same time reports where he was on February 4 and 5. It would seem that Chuikov's memory failed him. But don't rush. The date in Chuikov's memoirs is erroneous; he himself later corrected it to 6 February. Zhukov does not say a word about this day. Maybe there was a meeting and a call after all?

Zhukov confirms something, for example, his own orientation of February 4:

"The tasks of the troops of the front are to consolidate the success achieved in the next 6 days by active actions, to pull up everything that is lagging behind, to replenish supplies up to 2 refuelings of fuel, up to 2 ammunition loads and with a swift throw [February 5-16, take Berlin."

The fact of the interrupted offensive is indirectly confirmed by Rokossovsky (p. 384):

"I have the right to make a legitimate claim to the Stavka that, while weakening the front by redirecting the main forces to another direction, it did not consider it its duty to immediately reinforce the 2nd Belorussian Front with at least two armies and several tank or mechanized corps to continue operations

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in the western direction. Then what happened on the sector of the 1st Belorussian Front, when its right flank hung in the air because the 2nd Belorussian Front was unable to provide for it, would not have happened. Perhaps the fall of Berlin would have happened much earlier ... "

On February 8, Konev's 1st Ukrainian Front moved forward from the Steinau bridgehead on the western bank of the Oder. Three days later, Soviet troops punched a gap in the German defenses 140 km wide and deepened almost 60 km. They surrounded the fortresses of Glogau, and then Breslau (Wroclaw) with a 40,000-strong garrison (he would stay there until May 5, losing about 30,000 people). Konev firmly entrenched on the river. Neisse (Nissa), but there was no order to go to Berlin. Stalin pointed out to him the possibility of a German counteroffensive on the left flank and ordered him to stand still, strengthening his positions in Lower Silesia.

Chuikov's memories made a lot of noise. After Zhukov's answer in the Military Historical Journal, Chuikov also wanted to speak there, but the editors refused him. He then complained to the Central Committee. It was hard to brush aside the hero of Stalingrad, even half-retired. Especially since bourgeois propaganda seized on Chuikov's thesis. He was quoted in the foreign press. The magazine Der Spiegel spoke in the sense that the deliberate prolongation of the advance on Berlin resulted in unnecessary German casualties. Such was, in any case, the interpretation in the Soviet ideological bodies.

In January 1966, a meeting was held on this occasion with the head of the Political Directorate, Epishev, where Marshals of the Soviet Union Bagramyan, Zakharov, Konev, Moskalenko, Rokossovsky, Sokolovsky, Chuikov, Chief Marshal of the Armored Forces Rotmistrov, General of the Army Batitsky, Colonel Generals Efimov, Yegorov, Kalashnik, Povaliy, Skorobogatkin; Major Generals Kozlov, Makeev, Pavlenko; Major General Aviation Kopytin; Colonels Gfylev, Ryabov, Makarov. The deputy head of the department of administrative bodies of the Central Committee of the CPSU Comrade Savinkin oversaw the ideological order.

Epishev set the tone for the discussion: "The contrived situations and conclusions evoke fair objections from readers. So

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happened with the memoirs of Marshal of the Soviet Union Chuikov.

All the speakers after him tried to convince Chuikov to abandon what he had written.

Chuikov's answer was stubborn, almost Stalingrad:

"I cannot refuse what I have written. But I cannot say that I do not listen to the opinion of such a synclite. Written something right and maybe something wrong. I won't raise my hands right away, but I won't seek publication in the press."

Judging by a separate edition of his memoirs seven years later, Chuikov went to meet the wishes of the party. What tempted him, I will not undertake to judge. Maybe just tired of arguing one against all.

So, apparently, in early February, Stalin stopped the onslaught of Zhukov and Konev on Berlin. At that time he was at the Yalta Conference. Roosevelt and Churchill arrived in the Crimea on February 3, Stalin, who avoided flying, arrived on the 4th train. He immediately began to pay visits (Beavor, p. 99):

"On the day of his arrival in the Crimea, Stalin paid a visit to Churchill. He said that the Red Army could seize Berlin right now. He then visited Roosevelt, giving him a completely different version of events. Stalin emphasized the strength of German resistance and the difficulty of forcing the Oder.

Roosevelt was sure that it was he, and not Churchill, who knew how to deal with the Soviet leader. For his part, Stalin did not miss the opportunity to play on this confidence of the American president. Roosevelt also believed that it was necessary to win the confidence of the Soviet leader - something that Churchill never succeeded in doing. He even openly expressed his disagreement with the British strategy for the invasion of Germany. When Roosevelt suggested that Eisenhower establish direct contact with the Soviet Headquarters, Stalin warmly supported him. He has always welcomed the great openness of the American side, with little in return.

A logical question arises: if the leader saw the danger of a counterattack on Zhukov, why didn't he stop him, being

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in Moscow? There were no warnings from the General Staff, in any case, Shtemenko does not say a word about it. One gets the impression that the idea of delaying the assault occurred to Stalin only after his arrival in Yalta, and the motives were not operational, but political. Stalin always believed that the capture of the German capital would lead to a quick end to the war. As of February 6, a large part of Eastern and Central Europe was not yet under the control of the Red Army. Here is a reference about major centers with dates: Budapest fell on February 13, Königsberg on April 9, Vienna on April 13, Prague on May 9.

On February 6 in Yalta, Stalin and Churchill spoke about the future of Poland. The British Prime Minister emphasized that his country had entered the war over Poland, Stalin replied that in the past the Russians had not been distinguished by exemplary behavior towards the Poles. Formally, he had in mind the policy of tsarist Russia. At the same time, he could not help thinking about the secret protocol of the Soviet-German pact, which allowed him to occupy Eastern Poland. It was a cynical statement, Churchill did not yet know about the protocol: he could suspect, but he did not have exact information. In any case, Stalin intended to keep these territories (in Soviet parlance, Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia), but at the same time compensate Poland at the expense of Germany. The difficulty was that these territories were still in German hands. Posen (Poznan) was taken on February 26, Danzig (later Gdansk) on March 30, and Breslau (Wrocław) on May 6. Stalin preferred that by the time hostilities ended, Soviet troops were there.

Another possible reason is lend-lease. The war in Europe will end, the main revenues will stop. And so it happened, by the way. 4 days after Germany's capitulation, President Truman, without prior warning, stopped the shipment of goods destined for the USSR. The loaded transports were unloaded, those that had just put to sea were returned. All these reasons, lend-lease and undercaptured territories, do not exclude each other.

Stopping the attack on Berlin, Stalin did not set a new date. He didn't even know her then.

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THE DECISION TO TAKE BERLIN

The assault on Berlin, canceled at the beginning of February, remained, of course, on the agenda of Stalin and not only him. Generals, Soviet and allied, dreamed of capturing the capital of the enemy, and politicians, primarily Churchill, dreamed. Roosevelt at this time was already seriously ill. In addition, he usually did not interfere in military affairs. As for Churchill, his military reputation was, to put it mildly, tarnished since the First World War, when, at his insistence, the Entente got involved in the ill-fated Gallipoli operation. In any case, Eisenhower thwarted every attempt by the British Prime Minister to impose this or that decision on him. So it was before the landing in Normandy, nothing changed in the spring of forty-five.

Churchill appealed to Roosevelt | April:

"Russian armies will undoubtedly capture all of Austria and enter Vienna. If they also capture Berlin, will they not get a too exaggerated idea that they have made an overwhelming contribution to our common victory, and might this not lead them to a frame of mind that will cause serious and very significant difficulties? In future? Therefore, I think that from a political point of view we should move as far east as possible in Germany, and that in the event that Berlin comes within our reach, we must certainly take it. It seems reasonable from a military point of view as well."

This emotional call is overdue. Already at the end of March, the American commander-in-chief decided not to go to Berlin, which he immediately reported to Moscow, without informing the British. This message, code designation 5SAE-252, with texts in Russian and English, was presented to Stalin on March 31 by US Ambassador Harriman and Major General Dean, head of the American military mission. Here is the relevant passage from Dean's memoirs (pp. 157-158):

"On March 28, 1945, General Eisenhower sent me a message to pass on to Marshal Stalin. He asked me to do my best to get a complete answer. Eisenhower wrote that the immediate goal of his northern and southern armies was to capture the Ruhr and lock up the Germans there. After that

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once this encirclement is complete, his next move will be to cut Germany in half by linking up with the Russians. To achieve this goal, the main efforts of the Allies will be directed along the Erfurt-Leipzig-Dresden line. He also suggested that additional efforts be made to link up with the Russians in Austria in the Regensburg Linz region. Eisenhower asked Stalin whether these plans were consistent with the possible actions of the Red Army.

Of course, in the memoirs of Stalin's generals, the picture is different. Here is a well-informed Shtemenko (vol. 1, p. 227):

"There was no doubt that the allies intended to capture Berlin earlier than us, although, according to the Yalta agreements, the capital of Germany belonged to the zone of occupation of the Soviet troops."

Proof? The above letter from Churchill, which had no effect on the course of events.

Eisenhower was guided by several considerations in making his decision. He took into account that, having taken Berlin, the Allies would have to immediately clear the territory of East Germany, which would become the Soviet zone. Closely connected with this was the question of the forthcoming losses of the allies. Omar Bradley, when asked by the commander-in-chief, estimated them at one hundred thousand people. Stalin or Zhukov would accept this figure easily, but not a general from a democratic country where there are real voters and public opinion operates. There was another factor. The Allied Command took quite seriously the rumors then circulating that [Hitler was going to create in Bavaria and Northern Austria the last line of defense of the Reich, the so-called "Alpine fortress".

At the same time, Eisenhower showed childish naivety, hoping to receive truthful information from Stalin about the intentions of the Soviet command in response to his message. This will be discussed a little later.

Let's see how events unfolded in Moscow. Let's start with how Zhukov covers them (vol. 2, pp. 290-291). On March 29, he arrived in Moscow, "carrying with him the plan of the [th Belorussian Front for the Berlin operation," and late in the evening was in Stalin's Kremlin office on the call of the owner. Zhukov reported that his front was ready to launch an attack on Berlin in two weeks - together with the 2nd Ukrainian Front Konev

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va, but without waiting for the 2nd Belorussian Front of Rokossovsky, still busy with "the final liquidation of the enemy in the area of Danzig and [melon]. Stalin, as usual, agreed with the marshal's considerations, after which he gave him a certain document to read.

The letter was from one of the foreign well-wishers. It reported on behind-the-scenes negotiations between Nazi agents and official representatives of the Allies, from which it became clear that the Germans offered the Allies to stop fighting against them if they agreed to a separate peace on any terms.

This report also stated that the Allies allegedly rejected the Germans' harassment. But still, the possibility of opening the way for the allied forces to Berlin by the Germans was not ruled out.

Stalin threw a remark that Roosevelt, most likely, would not violate the agreements at Yalta, but everything could be expected from Churchill. It is worth paying attention to Zhukov's use of the dialect supposedly. Then Antonov appeared in the Supreme's office, reporting on the situation in the zones of the 2nd and 3rd Belorussian fronts.

Turning to A.I. Antonov, the Supreme said:

- Call Konev and order | April to arrive at Headquarters with a plan of operation for the 1st Ukrainian Front, and during these two days work with Zhukov on the general plan.

In a word, we have before us the usual situation for Zhukov's memoirs: before making a serious decision, Stalin must discuss it privately with him. Everything would be fine and smooth, but, as before, Zhukov's nemesis intervenes - Comrade Stalin's Visiting Journal. According to the magazine, on March 29 Zhukov was not in Stalin's office. Antonov was there, entered at 21.20, left at 23.30. Zhukov was marked on March 31 - simultaneously with Antonov and Shtemenko. All three were let in at 21.10, they left at 22.30.

20 minutes before the arrival of the military troika, three foreign visitors left Stalin's office: Harriman, Dean, and British Ambassador Kerr. It was then that Stalin received message 5ÿÿÿ-252 from Eisenhower. There is no indication that the leader introduced his military to him. However, his plans changed drastically. If earlier he held back his commanders, now he decided, on the contrary, to spur them on.

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In early April, two meetings were held with Stalin on the upcoming Berlin operation. I say two, although Zhukov and Shtemenko report one. Konev says that they met twice, and he has strong support - the Visitor's Journal. According to the Journal, Zhukov, Konev, Antonov and Shtemenko visited Stalin for two days in a row: April 2 and 3, both times for more than two hours. Konev wrote that it was | and April 2, but I tend to trust the Journal more.

At the first meeting, Stalin asked Shtemenko to read out a certain telegram, the essence of which, according to Konev, was as follows: "The Anglo-American command is preparing an operation to capture Berlin, setting the task of capturing it before the Soviet Army." Did you understand what happened? Stalin, having Eisenhower's message in his pocket that Berlin is not included in the goals of the Allies, tries to infuriate his commanders by reading an anonymous telegram without a date, about the authenticity of which we have no information.

After that, he asked: "So who will take Berlin: we or the allies?" and looked at Konev. The answer of that was predictable: "We will take Berlin, and we will take it before the Allies."

On April 1, Stalin replied to Eisenhower's message. Everything is going as well as possible, he wrote. Eisenhower's plan fully corresponded to the plans of the Red Army. Berlin has lost its strategic importance, the Soviet command will send only secondary troops against it. The Red Army will strike the main blow in a southerly direction - to join with the allies. The Soviet offensive is scheduled for the second half of May. Of course, he added, there may be changes dictated by circumstances. It was, Beevor writes, "the biggest April Fool's joke in modern history."

At this point, I will allow myself to ask the question: why has no one ever questioned the expediency of the Berlin operation? Indeed, if the war is won, is this decisive assault really necessary, in which the enemy has nowhere to retreat? It is no secret that such a situation leads to heavy losses of the attackers. What is the strategic advantage of the fact that the Soviet troops, and not the Western ones, will capture Berlin? How many Soviet soldiers have already died on the fields of this accursed war?

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us? Alas, this issue was not discussed in Moscow. Only - when will we take Berlin and with what forces.

The time for the operation was chosen only because Eisenhower decided not to go to Berlin for the time being - the reason was clearly not sufficient. The deployment of the 1st Belorussian Front, which, according to Stalin, was to take on the main efforts of the assault, cannot be called profitable. His intentions were obvious, which, as we shall see, the German side took advantage of. In addition, Zhukov had to attack the Seelow Heights head-on, a situation that experienced generals try to avoid. This common truth was expressed by Sun Tzu in the UT century BC: "If the enemy holds the heights, do not climb up to join the battle." Zhukov neglected this wisdom, although there was no urgent need for it. What guided him: ignorance, arrogance, fear of the dictator?

Even a simple postponement of the assault was extremely beneficial for the Soviet side. The Germans were demoralized, and the disintegration of their troops proceeded at a rapid pace. In this situation, the coverage of Berlin seems to be a more reasonable solution. Such a maneuver would certainly have prompted the flight of the German troops to the west - especially if they had the foresight to leave a loophole for this. |

The political benefits from the assault in general and the hasty assault were all the more doubtful - Germany had already been divided at Yalta, and three-quarters of Berlin still had to be given to the Allies. Stalin's question, "So who will take Berlin - us or the allies" betrays the Tiflis kinto, who puts petty vanity above the lives of his soldiers and state interests.

SURGERY PLANNING

Chuikov writes that in early February the Headquarters wanted the 1st Belorussian Front to go on the defensive. Reason: there was a gap on his right flank due to the delay of Rokossovsky (2nd Belorussian) in Prussia. Zhukov initially wanted to take Berlin in mid-February, even issued an appropriate order.

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"On February 4, the commander of the 1st Belorussian Front gathered for a conference at the headquarters of the 69th Army, where he himself arrived, commanders Berzarin, Kolpakchi, Katukov, Bogdanov and myself. We were already sitting at the tables, discussing the plan of attack on Berlin, when the phone rang on the HF unit. I sat almost nearby and heard the conversation on the phone well. Stalin called. He asked Zhukov where he was and what he was doing. The marshal replied that he had gathered the army commanders at the headquarters of Kolpakchi's army and was working with them on planning an attack on Berlin.

After listening to the report, Stalin suddenly, quite unexpectedly, as I understood it, demanded for the front commander to stop this planning and start developing an operation to defeat the Nazi troops of the Vistula Army Group located in Pomerania" (see Baeg, End of the Third Reich, October, 1964, No. 4, pp. 128-132).

Zhukov denies that on February 4 (hence, during the Yalta Conference) there was such a meeting and such a call (p. 278):

"But there was no such meeting on February 4 at the headquarters of the 69th Army. Therefore, a conversation on HF with I.V. Stalin, about whom V. I. Chuikov writes, also did not exist.

On February 4-5, I was at the headquarters of the 61st Army, which was deployed on the right wing of the front in Pomerania for operations against the enemy's Pomeranian grouping. Nor could the commander of the 1st Guards Tank Army, M.E. Katukov, because according to the directive of the front of February 2, 1945, No. 00244, on the morning of February 3, he regrouped the army troops from the Oder to the Friedeberg-Berlinchen-Landsberg area.

Commander of the 2nd Guards Tank Army, General S.I. Bogdanov also could not be at the meeting due to illness (at that time, General A.I. Radzievsky was acting as commander). Yes, and V.I. On February 3, Chuikov was in the city of Poznan, from where he reported to me about the course of the struggle for the fortress and the city.

Apparently, memory failed V.I. Chuikov.

And here is what Shtemenko recalls (vol. 1, pp. 221-222):

"On January 1945, the General Staff received the decision of the commander of the 1st Belorussian Front on an essentially non-stop offensive until the capture of the German capital. Prev

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it was supposed to bring up troops, especially artillery, in four days, gather rear areas, replenish combat supplies, put in order the materiel of tank formations, introduce the 3rd shock army and the 1st army of the Polish Army into the first echelon,

in order to continue the offensive on February 1-2 with all the forces of the front. The immediate task is to force the Oder on the move. The next one is a blow to Berlin. At the same time, the 2nd Guards Tank Army was supposed to cover it from the northwest, and | th - from the northeast.

A day later, a decision was received from the commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front. He, too, intended to act without noticeable pause. It was planned to continue the offensive on February 5-6 and to reach the Elbe on February 25-28, and to capture Berlin with the right wing in cooperation with the Belorussian Front.

The same point of view was held by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. On February 4, 1945, at the well-known Yalta Conference, as Winston Churchill recalls, he gave a very optimistic assessment of the situation, noting that the enemy's front had been broken through and the Germans were only filling up the holes.

Consequently, the opinions of all agreed on one thing - it is necessary to continue the unceasing offensive and take control of Berlin. The fronts received the necessary instructions in this regard from Moscow and, in turn, assigned tasks to the armies.

"... The stretching of the flank made it impossible to create a sufficiently powerful strike force in the main direction, and the growing resistance of the enemy concealed the threat of his breakthrough to our rear. This threat became even more real because between the 2nd Byelorussian fronts there was a huge and almost unsecured gap.

GK. Zhukov tried to regroup the 47th Army on the main line. However, the enemy did not allow this intention to be carried out. It was not possible to create a turning point in the situation and through private operations to defeat the enemy on the flank. All this sharply reduced the offensive capabilities of the Soviet troops, but the order of the Headquarters to capture Berlin was not canceled.

The enemy forces in Eastern Pomerania grew rapidly. Our ranks thinned every day. In the 8th Guards Army, for example, which marched up to 500 kilometers with continuous, heavy fighting, the regiments were already two battalions, and 22-45 people remained in the companies. The same was observed in our other armies that were aiming at Berlin.

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On March 31, the General Staff considered together with them the plan for further actions of the fronts. Marshal Konev was very agitated at the same time about the dividing line with the 1st Belorussian Front, because it did not give him the opportunity to strike at Berlin. This situation arose at the end of January, during the first Berlin operation. Then it was decided that Berlin would be taken by two fronts, Zhukovsky and Konevsky, however, at the same time, the Stavka approved the dividing line proposed by Zhukov, which did not allow Konev to enter the German capital. Stalin did not forget that back in November 1944 he appointed Zhukov the conqueror of Berlin. It turned out to be an obvious absurdity: on the one hand, they approved the decision of Marshal Konev - to attack Berlin with the right wing, and on the other hand, they established a dividing line that did not allow this. No one, however, in the General Staff was able to remove this obstacle (Shtemenko, vol. I, p. 227).

| On April 1945, the plan for the Berlin operation was discussed at Headquarters. Antonov reported: on the situation on the fronts, on the actions of the allies, their plans. Stalin drew the conclusion from this that we must take Berlin as soon as possible: the operation must begin no later than April 16 and everything must be completed within 12-15 days. The front commanders agreed with this and assured the Headquarters that the troops would be ready on time.

The plan for the Berlin operation had been developed at the General Staff for a long time, since autumn, but there was no exact date. Now everything has fallen into place. Everything but one detail. Now, in the course of his report, Antonov mentioned this, although Stalin had previously forbidden to return to this topic.

Shtemenko (vol. I, p. 221):

"The Chief [of the General Staff found it necessary to once again draw the attention of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief to the dividing line between the fronts. It was emphasized that it virtually excludes the direct participation in the battles for Berlin of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, and this may adversely affect the timing of the tasks. Marshal Konev spoke in the same vein. He argued the need to direct part of the forces of the 1st Ukrainian Front, especially tank armies, to the southwestern outskirts of Berlin.

Stalin made a compromise: he did not completely abandon his idea, but he did not completely reject the ideas of I.S. Konev, supported by [Enstab. On the map reflecting the intent of the opera

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walkie-talkie, the Supreme Commander silently crossed out that part of the demarcation line that cut off the 1st Ukrainian Front from Berlin, brought it to the village of Lubben (60 kilometers southeast of the capital) and cut it off. |

"Whoever breaks in first, let him take Berlin," he told us later.

The General Staff was pleased with this turn of affairs. This damned demarcation line haunted us for more than two months. Marshal Konev did not mind either. It suited him too."

According to Glantz, in January 1945 the idea and decision to advance on Berlin came from Stalin, but he later hung up for reasons that are not entirely clear. This does not contradict Chuikov, but complements his version. Zhukov gave the order for the offensive on February 15, based on Stalin's directive, Chuikov did not know and could not know about this (Te stole{ Wegt Oyenzone (Eebgiagu 1945).

Rokossovsky's analysis is as follows:

"I have the right to make a legitimate claim to the Stavka that, while weakening the front by redirecting the main forces to another direction, it did not consider it its duty to immediately strengthen the 2nd Belorussian Front with at least two armies and several

tank or mechanized corps to continue the operation in the western direction. Then what happened at the site would not have happened | th Belorussian Front, when its right flank hung in the air due to the inability of the 2nd Belorussian Front to provide it. Perhaps the fall of Berlin would have happened much earlier..." (Rokossovsky, p. 384).

SEELOW HEIGHTS: A VICTORY WE HAVE SUFFERED

(Based on materials from Novaya Gazeta. Author — Alexander Melenberg, archive)

"There is silence on the Seelow Hills..." - this is how one of the best, perhaps, songs about the war began. Indeed, silence: about the battles for the Seelow Heights, which was the initial phase of the Berlin offensive, an inquisitive descendant will not find a single specific study.

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This is partly due to the fact that everything was overshadowed by the final phase of the operation - the assault on Berlin, the Reichstag, and, finally, the Victory itself. But the main reason is different. In a clear unwillingness to highlight the unsatisfactory leadership of the battles for the heights. Moreover, he commanded the operation "Marshal of Victory" G.K. Zhukov.

Ten years ago, the secrecy was removed from the figures of losses suffered by the army in this war. And it immediately became clear what an incredible price the people paid for the desire of their military leaders to capture Berlin on the fourth, then on the fifth, then on the sixth day of the operation. For unprepared, without proper reconnaissance and artillery preparation, frontal attacks.

Losses in the Berlin operation (April 16-May 8) amounted to 361,367 people killed and wounded. And the average daily losses (15 7 [2 people]) are the highest among all offensive operations of the Second World War. For comparison: near Moscow they were equal to 10,910 people, near Stalingrad - 6392; on the Kursk Bulge - 11,313; in Belarus - 11,262.

Not so long ago, the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense with a creak, but slightly opened the veil of secrecy over some operational materials of the April battles [945.

The concept of the Berlin operation was defined in general terms as early as November 1944. Even then, when planning an offensive in Poland (the Vistula-Oder operation), the Stavka aimed the Belorussian Front at Berlin. At the same time, G.K. was appointed commander of the 1st Belorussian Front, which, in fact, should have received the laurels of the winner. Zhukov. And who commanded this front throughout the 1944 campaign, K.K. Rokossovsky moved to the neighboring 2nd Belorussian, which had a less honorable task - to conquer the northern coast of Germany. Since then, a black cat has been running between the marshals. They could not even hear one another indifferently.

Pleased with the success of the winter offensive in Poland, Zhukov reported to the Headquarters on January 26, 1945, that the troops entrusted to him on February 1-2 would cross the Oder on the move and would "develop the offensive in the direction of Berlin." Zhukov clearly underestimated the enemy. After stubborn fighting, his troops on February 3 were only able to cling to a small bridgehead on the western bank of the Oder, in the Kustrin area.

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But this did not cool Georgy Konstantinovich. On February 10, he submitted a plan for the Berlin offensive to Stalin:

«1. The enemy is regrouping the troops of the Vistula Army Group in order to organize a stable defense on the outskirts of Stettin and at the turn of the river. Oder.

2. The purpose of the operation is to disrupt the enemy's operational concentration, to break through his defenses on the western bank of the river. Oder to seize the city of Berlin...

... The attack on Berlin can begin on 20.2.45.

The rate, of course, did not mind: if you can, start. But subsequent events showed the whole inconsistency of Zhukov's soon-burning intentions. In the end, a new plan of operation was developed with an initial date of 16 April. A powerful fist of four combined arms and two tank armies was concentrated on the direction of the main attack.

According to the directive of the Headquarters, these armies were located "in line". Moreover, the introduction of the 2nd Guards Tank Armies into the battle was envisaged "after breaking through the enemy's defenses in order to develop success bypassing Berlin from the north and northeast." However, Zhukov neglected the plan of the General Staff and decided to place the tank armies in the second echelon behind the combined arms ones. He planned to bring them into the breach "after the infantry had captured the Seelow Heights." It was, let's say, a somewhat unusual decision - to take well-fortified, dominating heights over the terrain with a frontal attack by the forces of one infantry. The marshal apparently intended to save the tanks for street fighting in Berlin. One must think that Zhukov possessed incredible penetrating power, since he managed to get Stalin's permission to correct an already approved plan.

Even the dry lines of documents convey the nervous atmosphere before the battle.

No. 00553/op 15 April 1945 15.30

The commander of the troops of the front ordered:

Artillery preparation to begin promptly at 0500 on 16.4.45.

Start the infantry attack at the twentieth minute of artillery preparation, i.e. v.20 16.4.45

Chief of Staff of the 1st Belorussian Front, Colonel General Malinin.

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After 10 minutes, the troops receive a new order:

No. 00554/op 15 April 1945 15.40

The commander of the troops of the front ordered:

Artillery preparation to start exactly at 5.45 [6.4.45. Infantry attack — vb.15.

Everything else is according to the previously established plan.

Chief of Staff of the Belorussian Front, Colonel General Malinin.

Whatever it was, that 20 minutes of artillery preparation, that 30 - it's still not enough. During other offensives, the enemy positions were ironed for an hour, two at a time. And here, after all, only infantry went on the attack, without the support of tanks and self-propelled guns. Apparently, Zhukov decided to compensate for such a hasty fire support for the attack by the density of the attackers, which was completely unprecedented for the operations of this war. There were 280 artillery pieces and 1282 men per one kilometer of the front!

Such a glut (more than one soldier per meter of the battlefield!) Was undoubtedly into the hands of the Germans. Immediately after the attack began, they retreated to the second line, located along the very heights. Moreover, they fired from there direct fire from guns without a miss.

Having suffered huge losses, the infantry was unable to advance beyond the slopes of the Seelow Hills.

Zhukov's order for April 16 was brief: "The enemy will be defeated on the shortest road to Berlin. The capital of fascist Germany will be taken, and we will hoist the banner of victory on it" (Kear4a, Am{Popu apa Rama E15Ber. Tpe {alp Vegit, p. 309).

Further, another innovation of Zhukov is described (pp. 311-312), from which Chuikov's troops had a very bad time. It was Zhukov's so-called secret weapon - the use of light. The British also used it, but they launched rockets vertically, which, with their scattered light, created the appearance of a moonlit night. Zhukov ordered to shine searchlights and, moreover, horizontally. As soon as Chuikov's troops got out of the trenches, they were blinded by a bright light. The Germans, on the other hand, saw the dark shadows of soldiers against a bright background - they were excellent targets. When the commanders of the advancing companies sounded the alarm

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gu and the light were turned off, the troops (after the bright light) were completely blinded, and the light had to be turned on again.

On the afternoon of April 16, Zhukov brought both tank armies into battle. This haste broke the plans of attack that had already been adjusted once. After all, the tanks had to be introduced into the places of the infantry breakthrough, having received a "green street" for moving to the rear of the enemy, bypassing the heights from the north. Instead, they climbed up the hills, followed the communications of the infantry, creating real chaos in the operational formations of the combined arms armies. There is documented evidence of the wounded, how tanks crushed their own infantry. Under enemy fire, all the troops were mixed up, and a complete confusion was created in their management.

Zhukov himself was always at the NP (observation post) of the commander of the 8th Guards Army V.I. Chuikov. According to the testimony of the latter, which, of course, was not included in his semi-official memoirs, aviation did not act in the best way at that moment. She bombed her own advancing troops with might and main. Several bombs fell near the commander's NP. But neither Chuikov nor Zhukov, for some reason, had any connection with aviation. In order to somehow stop this massacre, the anti-aircraft gunners were ordered ... to open fire on their aircraft.

Only in the evening [April 7] for Zhukov himself, the situation more or less cleared up. In addition, he received information about Konev.

Konev's operation, which took place 55 miles south of the Seelow Heights, was more successful (Rea4 an4 E1\$Per, p. 314). In general, the front extended for 250 miles, but the main breakthrough was carried out by three armies 18 miles from Nesse. Konev planned an offensive using [50 crossings between the towns of Forst and Muskau, and there were no bridges here. At 0415 hours the artillery opened fire along all 250 miles of the front. Then, having found out where the fords were, Konev's troops ensured the safety of the crossings, crossed Nassau and went around the heights, because they knew that the steepness would not allow them to be taken head-on. When Zhukov reported to Stalin on the course of the operation on the Seelow Heights, Stalin insinuatingly remarked that Konev was doing well - his troops were moving forward without encountering serious enemy resistance (p. 316).

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Konev set up his headquarters in an ancient castle between Nesse and the dividing line, only 20 miles from Lublin (pp. 324-327). After talking with Rybalko and Lelyushenko, he called Stalin and reported that his tanks were moving west of the Spree. Stalin interrupted him, saying that Zhukov was not doing very well. Then he suddenly fell silent. Konev was afraid to breathe. Is this his unexpected chance to be the first to enter Berlin? Stalin asked if Zhukov's tanks could fit into the gap made by Konev. Konev used his chance: "Comrade Stalin, this will take a long time and may lead to misunderstandings. We have enough forces and we can turn the attacks of both fronts on Berlin. Fine". After another pause, Konev heard what he had been waiting for so long: "I agree. Turn your armies towards Berlin."

April 18 at 12.47 A.M. Konev gave directive 215 to his commanders: "Tanks must move firmly and decisively in the main direction. They should bypass cities and large villages and not engage in any battles. Gotta explain to everyone

commanders that the success of a tank army depends on maneuverability and speed of operations. Konev wanted to be sure that it should be absolutely clear to everyone what he wants.

Stalin himself informed Zhukov that Konev was marching on Berlin. Zhukov urgently issues new orders to his commanders: everyone moves forward, no one stands still and does not retreat. This battle takes a lot of strength and reserves - it must end quickly. Commanders who do not have enough determination and courage will be immediately removed (which meant being demoted to soldiers or sent to penal battalions, which was little better than being shot):

Order of the Commander of the | th Belorussian Front to all commanders of armies and commanders of individual formations:

April 17, 1945 8:30 pm

|. Worst of all, the offensive Berlin operation is carried out by the 69th Army under the command of General Kolpakchi, the 1st tank army under the command of General

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Colonel Katukov and the 2nd Tank Army under the command of Colonel General Bogdanov.

These armies, having colossal forces and means, act clumsily and indecisively for the second day, trampling before a weak enemy.

Commander Katukov and his corps commanders Yushchuk, Dremov, Babadzhanyan do not observe the battlefield and the actions of their troops, sitting far in the rear (10-12 km). These generals do not know the situation and lag behind events.

2. If we allow slowness in the development of the Berlin operation, then the troops will be exhausted. They will use up all their material reserves without taking Berlin.

I demand: A) immediately develop the swiftness of the offensive. | -yi2nd tank armies and the 9th TC to break through with the support of the 3rd, 5th and 8-1st Guards. armies to the rear of the enemy's defenses and rapidly advance into the Berlin area.

B) all commanders to be on the OP of corps commanders fighting in the main direction, and corps commanders to be in brigades and divisions of the first echelon in the main direction.

Staying in the rear is strictly forbidden

Zhukov.

Point "B" caused unusually large losses in the officer corps. After all, it is no secret that only platoon lieutenants were "on the front" with the soldiers. Yet the rest of the chiefs, starting with company commanders, settled much further than the trenches. Now the generals have removed the colonels from their homes, they, in turn, have moved under the colonels, and so on in rank.

But the next day, April 18, did not give the expected results. The troops, climbing up, suffered tangible losses in living strength and technique.

No. 00566/op April 18, 1945 22.00

|. The offensive against Berlin is developing unacceptably slowly. If the operation continues like this, the offensive may bog down.

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2. The main reason for the poor offensive lies in the lack of organization, the lack of interaction between troops and the lack of exactingness towards persons who are not performing combat missions. I order: 1) All commanders, commanders of corps, divisions and brigades to go to the advanced units and personally deal with the situation, namely: a) where and what kind of enemy; 6) where are their parts, where are the means of reinforcement and what do they specifically do; c) whether the parts have interaction, ammunition and how the control is organized.

3. Before 12 noon on April 19, put the units in order, specifying the tasks, organize the interaction of all units, replenish ammunition and at 12 o'clock along the entire front begin artillery and aviation preparation and, depending on the nature of the artillery preparation, attack the enemy and rapidly develop the offensive according to the plan...

4. All transport vehicles of mechanized brigades, mechanized corps and rear of brigades and corps must be immediately removed from the roads and taken to shelters. In the future, the motorized infantry will advance on foot ...

Zhukov.

Only after three days of direct frontal attacks, Zhukov finally decided to support the bleeding infantry and tankers with artillery and aviation fire. But even now, fuss is felt in the actions of the marshal. Following the issuance of an order common to all armies, Zhukov begins to give orders to the corps commanders over the head of their direct commanders, the commanders of the armies.

Combat order of the commander of the | th Belorussian Front to the commander of the 9th Guards Tank Corps, Major General Vedenev:

April 18, 1945 24.00

9th Guards Tk acts very badly and indecisively. I reprimand you for bad actions. By the end of the day on April 19, 1945, at any cost, the corps, under your responsibility, will reach the Freudenburg area.

Bring the execution to me personally.

Zhukov. 362

Combat order to the commander of the 1st Guards Tank Corps, Colonel Babadzhanyan:

[April 8, 1945 24:00 |

I very sternly warn you about incomplete service compliance and demand more courageous and organized actions.

At any cost (highlighted by us. - Ed.) 19.4. go to the Werder district, Betorshagen.

Zhukov.

As is known (06 this is written, in particular, by V. Karpov in the book "The Generalissimo"), the hitch in the offensive of the Soviet troops caused great joy in the Headquarters of the German command. Hitler exclaimed with enthusiasm: "We repelled this blow. Near Berlin, the Russians will suffer the most bloody defeat that can ever be!"

The Fuhrer was wrong. By the end of the day [9 April, the Seelow Heights had been overcome.

The Russians have won. The bloodiest war in history.

GIVE BERLIN

(We cite episodes about the storming of Berlin from the book Veach ap4 E15Ver TVe Ra! o Vet)

Both Germans and Russians were preparing for the last battles.

Guderian wanted to take German troops out of Italy, the Balkans, Norway and East Prussia and create an effective force in order to launch a counterattack and drive the Soviet troops out of Berlin and North Germany. He had at least two "battles" with [titer. Hitler reluctantly agreed, evacuating one division from Courland. But instead of taking troops from the south, on the contrary, he sent reinforcements there, in particular, sent the most powerful fighting force of Germany - the 6th SS Panzer Army - from the north and west to Hungary (p. 240).

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Finally, Chuikov broke into the German defense line and began to control the Seelow Heights. His troops now faced a 37-mile-long road straight as an arrow that led to the very center of Berlin (see further on pp. 330-367).

Zhukov hoped that by April 19 he would take Berlin, or at least reach its eastern outskirts. It was the fourth day of his attacks. But he was still 20 miles from the eastern border of the city, and still German resistance held his troops.

Chuikov had other concerns. His tanks were advancing so fast that he feared for the flanks and was afraid that the Germans would cut the lines of communication behind. But when Lelyushenko expressed the same concerns, he reassured him: "Don't be afraid to be cut off from the infantry, go ahead." And they were moving. Rybalko's 3rd Guards Army advanced 21-25 miles in fighting, while Lelyushenko's 4th Guards Army covered more than 30 miles.

On the evening of April 19, Rokossovsky reported to Stalin by telephone that the troops were ready to march tomorrow. When they were talking, Stalin actually heard the explosions of bombs - it was the Women's Night Combat Aviation Battalion under the leadership of Maria Bershanskaya bombing Berlin.

On April 20, at 4 a.m., the offensive began: the 5th Army crossed Stetin, the 19th and 2nd shock armies prepared to advance, the 17th and 49th, supported by tank corps and motorized infantry, attacked Berlin from the south. By the end of the day, the ring around Berlin began to shrink. Nine Russian armies participated in the encirclement. Zhukov's forces were advancing from the north, east and southeast, while Konev was to move from the south and southwest. During the day, Zhukov quickly captured the northern outskirts of the city, sending the 47th Army, reinforced by the Ninth Guards Tank Corps, to close the city from the north for a long distance. These tanks fought in Havel and then prepared to strike south to link up with Lelyushenko's Fourth Guards Tank Army. Only 20 miles separated these armies. If they link up, the capital will be so locked up on the right that the Germans will have no hope of relief. Southeast of the city, the two Russian fronts were also very close to each other. Chuikov's people were in the suburbs and by noon

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reached Dama. On the Konev front, Rybalko's Third Guards Tank Army pushed its way north and was only seven MILES FROM THEM.

Just before the storming of Berlin, Stalin gave the order to revise the movements of the fronts. Now that Zhukov's troops are encircling Berlin from the north, he no longer needs Rokossovsky to storm Berlin. It must protect Zhukov's flanks by moving west and destroying the German forces surrounding Stetin and driving Mantofel's Third Armored Army and Steiner's two divisions towards the British. Stalin also renewed the dividing line between the fronts of Konev and Zhukov, supposedly to avoid confusion and misunderstandings - so that the troops would not fight each other (directive 11074). final

the prize for the capture of Berlin was intended for Zhukov, although Stalin did not talk about it - he wanted to squeeze the last drops of advantage out of the marshal competition.

Troops from the 28th Corps of Chuikov's 8th Guards Army were moving through the Shenfield airfield towards the southeast of the city when they met Soviet tanks moving in the opposite direction. The tanks belonged to Rybalko's Third Guards Army and were the right wing of Konev's First Ukrainian Front. This unexpected meeting surprised Chuikov and was a shock to Zhukov. He had no idea that Chuikov was already in Berlin. He called Chuikov and asked who had seen Rybalko's tanks. Later, Zhukov's doubts were dispelled when Rybalko himself arrived at Chuikov's command post and talked to him on the phone.

Chuikov's army, cooperating with the First Tank Army, moved to the right, facing northwest. By evening they reached the Teltow Canal, stopped, regrouped and prepared to storm Berlin. Zhukov's armies also reorganized to strike at the heart of the city. Each corps had a division in reserve. They were divided into battle groups, each with special troops trained and armed for street fighting. They had special flamethrowers for bunkers and fortifications that turned enemies into running and screaming torches. Artillery and Katyushas walked along with the troops or a little behind, which fired over their heads, where the troops needed to.

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On the morning of April 25, 464,000 Soviet soldiers and officers, armed with 12,700 rifles and machine guns, 21,000 Katyushas and 1,500 tanks, were waiting for the order to storm the center of Berlin (pp. 385-454). Despite the overwhelming advantage in troops and weapons, the task was not an easy one. No one knew better than the hero of Stalingrad, Chuikov, that defending a city is much easier than attacking. Especially when it came to the city of Hitler, who promised that the battle would be for every street, where every house would be a fortress. Berlin was to become a Hitler city. Zhukov thought the same way. Why did he have troops trained for street fighting.

As we approached the center, the character of the city changed. It was no longer a suburb with small houses and wide streets. The soldiers quickly realized that fighting in five-story buildings with corridors and basements was not the same as in private one- and two-story houses. Yes, and you can't go through the streets in columns - as soon as the first tank is hit by a shell-armored faustpatron, the entire column is locked.

After one or two days of heavy losses, the troops regrouped and fought in small groups of tanks, infantry and artillery. Zhukov's tactics inside the city were simple, brutal and effective. His troops indiscriminately smashed houses with rockets, turning them into burning ruins, then punched holes in basements in pursuit of the fleeing Germans. At the same time, the losses among the civilian population were huge.

The Germans fiercely resisted, but could not do anything. Soviet troops surrounded a place a mile from the Reichstag and called the Citadel, which was fiercely defended by SS fanatics. All the leaders of Germany were here. On the 28th, Keitel found that the Third Panzer Army had completely retreated.

April 30 in | At one o'clock in the afternoon, the Reichstag was seized. Sergeants Yegorov and Kantaria with a red banner made their way to the roof only at 11 pm. They climbed a bronze statue of Germany on a horse and stuck a flagpole through a hole made by a projectile near the horse's left front leg. 10 minutes before the beginning of May, a red flag fluttered on the roof of the Reichstag. The trouble was that no one could see him or take a picture of him. Another 24 hours passed before the roof of the Reichstag was removed last defender.

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PRICE OF THE FLAG OVER THE REICHSTAG

Losses of the 1st Belorussian Front in the Berlin operation

(Material from Wikisource - a free library) 05/08/2003

G for | 76[265 | 7865 [in —

[476 [99 [532 [726 | 14202_ [780 [795 I

344 266 476 532 726 780 795 765

19 576 [765 | 256

Total military losses in the Berlin operation

We have already cited data from the archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense

According to the materials < 1st Army of the Polish Army "(source: In Pr: // 4g-vishonpyueoigpa [.com / 20837.14. Categories: Statistics / Red Army | Military losses. Victory. gi.) they are somewhat different:

During the Berlin strategic offensive operation, 70 German infantry divisions, 23 tank and motorized divisions, and most of the Wehrmacht aviation were defeated. About 500,000 soldiers and officers were taken prisoner, more than [1,000 guns and mortars, more than [500 tanks and assault guns, 4,500 aircraft] were captured.

During 23 days of continuous offensive battles, the Red Army and the Polish Army during the Berlin operation lost 81,116 people killed, 280,000 people wounded and sick. Losses of military equipment and weapons from

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put: 1997 tanks and self-propelled artillery installations, 2108 guns and mortars, 917 combat aircraft, 216 thousand small arms.

The Government of the USSR and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR established the medal "For the Capture of Berlin", which was awarded to more than 1 million 82 thousand soldiers and officers.

The Berlin operation is one of the largest operations of the Second World War. On both sides, 3.5 million people, 52 thousand guns and mortars, about 8 thousand tanks and self-propelled guns, 11 thousand aircraft. It was distinguished by exceptionally high intensity of the struggle. The heavy losses of our troops testify to the degree of fierceness of the fighting. During the operation, the troops of the three fronts lost over 352,000 men (over 78,000 of them were irretrievable losses). The 1st Belorussian Front suffered the greatest losses. They amounted to about 180 thousand people (including irretrievable losses - about 38 thousand). The 1st and 2nd armies of the Polish Army, numbering a total of about 156,000 people, lost about 9,000 people during the Berlin operation (including about 3,000 irretrievable losses). One Polish division (12.5 thousand people) took part in the storming of Berlin. The losses of the fronts and in military equipment were large: more than 2,11 thousand guns and mortars, 2 thousand tanks and self-propelled guns, over 900 aircraft.

HITLER EXITS THE GAME

Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun committed suicide in the early morning of Monday, April 30, 1940. At that time, the Soviet troops were very close, a few hundred meters away. They soon took possession of the Fuhrer's office and his last refuge. According to the personal testimony of the guards and dental data, the charred remains of Hitler and Braun were identified, after which they were sent to Moscow. The news of the death of the Nazi leader spread throughout the world.

After a short time, the Soviet leadership added a dialectical afterword to these facts. In early June, Zhukov told stunned foreign correspondents that Hitler's current whereabouts were unknown. As if

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the Fuhrer and Eva Braun managed to escape from Berlin at the last moment. According to the marshal, they may be in Spain.

The initiative for this action came from Stalin. The leader was one of the first to receive the news of his former partner's suicide. On the night of May 1, Zhukov called him and reported all the details, including the letter addressed to the Soviet leader signed by Goebbels and Bormann. Stalin's reaction was: "The scoundrel has finished playing. It's a pity that we couldn't take him alive" (Bezymensky, Operation "Myth"... p. 9). At that time he had other urgent concerns, but after the victory he decided, in his old habit, to put a shadow on the wattle fence. Perhaps Stalin did not like that the Fuhrer not only took poison, but also shot himself. Like, a Nazi geek is not supposed to die as a soldier. Be that as it may, at the end of May he told Harry Hopkins, who arrived in Moscow, that Hitler was alive and hiding somewhere. At the same time, he referred to reports that German submarines with the gold reserves of the Reich had gone to Japan. The Fuhrer could be on board one of them. By this time, the Soviet disinformation campaign was in full swing. Two days after this conversation, Time magazine published a sensational story about the rescue of Hitler, who allegedly escaped from the bunker on a trolleybus through an underground passage. The basis for the story was a fake planted by Soviet agents. There were other stories...

In mid-July in Potsdam, Stalin made this disinformation official by informing Secretary of State Burns that Hitler and Eva Braun were alive and in Spain or Argentina. Truman sat at the same table and heard it all. The bike went for a walk around the world. Many believed. Indirectly, this was a moral reproach to the West, at the same time it was easier to forget the Soviet-Nazi cooperation in 1939-1941. (see Zayoga, p. 511).

In October, Operation Myth was launched. Soviet specialists, under the strict supervision of the Chekists, began to investigate again the circumstance of the so-called. suicide of the Fuhrer and his wife. They concluded that no definitive conclusion could be drawn. This meant that they might be alive. Which is what was required to be proved.

The version about saving the Fuhrer became one of the propaganda tools of the Cold War. side effect, not

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envisaged by Soviet planners, manifested itself in the fact that many Germans, as well as neo-Nazis in different countries, believed in the Fuhrer's salvation. It is hard to say what Stalin actually achieved with these decades of lies. Most likely, it was one of his poorly baked inventions.

THE SURRENDER OF GERMANY, FIRST AND SECOND

The ceremony was scheduled for noon on the 8th, but Vyshinsky arrived very late, perhaps on purpose. So we started at midnight. Interestingly, Dean also arrived from Moscow, but on time (see Oeap, p. 162).

It seems that Chuikov was not present at the surrender signing ceremony. Zhukov recalls (vol. 2, p. 332) what happened after the signing of the act of surrender:

"I was surrounded by fighting friends - V.D. Sokolovsky, M.S. Malinin, K.F. Telegin, N.A. Antipenko, V.Ya. Kolpakchi, V.I. Kuznetsov, S.I. Bogdanov, N.E. Berzarin, F.E. Bokov, P.A. Belov, A.V. Gorbatoev and others.

Gorbatoev does not mention his presence in his memoirs (p. 342):

"On May 7, we reached the Elbe on the entire front of the army, having cleared our strip of the enemy. But the war was not over yet, we heard a distant cannonade to the north, and therefore we continued to advance north, clearing the right neighbor's zone from the enemy, capturing prisoners and trophies. Guards were left along the shore with the task of detaining all those trying to cross to the other side.

The morning of May 9 was the most long-awaited, the most joyful for every Soviet person. This morning we learned about the complete and unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany to the allied forces."

PRAGUE SPRING FORTY-FIVE

On April 28, Stalin asked Konev over the phone: who will take Prague? He, knowing full well what was expected of him, after a short reflection replied that he was ready to turn south. At the beginning of the year, Hitler believed that Prague would be one of the main

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Soviet goals, he just did not foresee that it would be attacked after Berlin.

As a matter of fact, the Red Army has long been fighting in the eastern part of Czechoslovakia. There were two fronts, the 2nd and 4th Ukrainian fronts, - a total of seven rifle and one tank army. It was an impressive force: 750 thousand soldiers, 8300 artillery pieces and mortars, 580 tanks and 1400 aircraft. Malinovsky's 2nd Ukrainian Front included the Czechoslovak corps and two Romanian armies - a total of approximately 80 thousand soldiers (Eiksop, Vegit, p. 622). At the end of March, Stalin, dissatisfied with the results of the actions of the 4th Ukrainian, decided to remove the commander Petrov and put Eremenko in his place. In the end, the urgings of the Supreme Commander bore fruit. On April 26, Malinovsky's troops took Brno, four days later Eremenko's forces captured Moravian Ostrava. The losses of the two fronts were impressive - 38,400 killed and 140,000 wounded, but Stalin did not punish for this. Fireworks rumbled in Moscow, and Prague occupied the thoughts of the Supreme. Because in early May there was a threat that the Americans, who were approaching the Czechoslovak border from the west, could take it.

Churchill at that time was very worried about the situation that was developing in Central Europe. The capitals of the countries of the region - Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, Bucharest, Belgrade and Sofia - all fell into the hands of the Red Army. The British Prime Minister made efforts to prevent this from happening to Prague. On April 30, he turned to Truman about this. The President's chief military adviser, General Marshall, showed no enthusiasm. Truman presented the decision to Eisenhower, to whom he told him that he was not inclined to sacrifice American lives for purely political purposes. He postponed the final choice until the time when the American troops reached Pilsen and Carlsbad.

Stalin at dawn | May ordered Zhukov that the 1st Belorussian no later than May 4 should occupy Konev's positions south of Berlin. Konev received strict orders to finish off the German forces encircled east of Lückenwalde by May 3, after which he would exchange positions with Zhukov and be ready to attack. The next day, Malinovsky received instructions to regroup his troops for an attack on Prague with the task of capturing the city no later than May 12-14. According to the calculations of the Headquarters, the German forces in Czechoslovakia, the Center group and

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the remnants of the "Austria" group consisted of 62 divisions, while the three Soviet fronts had 153.

At dawn on May 4, Konev's troops received an order to advance to the south, their first task was to overcome the Sudetes as soon as possible. The tank armies of Lelyushenko and Rybalko should have moved at maximum speed without getting involved in the battles for Dresden. All armies, except for the 28th and 52nd, were to act on the evening of May 6th.

At this time, Eisenhower came to the conclusion that it makes sense to go to Prague, about which he informed the Soviet Chief of the General Staff Antonov. He protested vigorously. Allied troops must not cross the boundary line, otherwise there will be unnecessary complications. At the same time, he referred to the fact that the Red Army stopped its offensive on the Lower Elbe when the same Eisenhower asked her to. General Omar Bradley visited Konev, who announced that he did not need help from the Americans, after which he arranged a banquet. The allied commander decided to leave the American troops in place. Paton was ordered not to go to Prague. In a telegram to Antonov, Eisenhower wrote: "I believe that the Soviet troops will be able to quickly go on the offensive and defeat the enemy forces in the center of the country."

Meanwhile, in Prague, where there were rumors that Paton's tanks were a few kilometers from the city, an uprising began on May 4. Citizens tore down German street signs and wrote patriotic appeals on them. The Prague radio station remained in the hands of the Germans, it transmitted warnings and threats, but this did not work. Street demonstrations continued. The organizers of the Resistance movement, the communists and nationalists, who planned to come out on May 7, were at a loss. On May 5, the Radio Prague station was in the hands of the rebels. The People's Council decided to lead the uprising, although the drops of weapons promised by the British never materialized. May Radio Prague sent several desperate calls for help to the airwaves. At 00.53 they asked the Americans to save Prague, at 2.10 they turned in Russian to Lieutenant Colonel Sidorov from the 4th department of the NKVD in Kyiv. The calls continued throughout the night. The answer came only from the BBC - an answer, but no help.

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Meanwhile, at 0328 there was another appeal in Russian, this time to Vlasov's forces. The head of the Russian Liberation Army (ROA), formed under the auspices of the Germans, has been in Prague since April 16. He made desperate attempts to form a third force with the participation of Czech nationalists in order to hold out until the arrival of the Americans. He managed to attract emigrants to his side - Cossacks von Panwitz and parts of Domanov and Rogozhin. He also contacted the Czech underground. [General Kletsanda, who once fought at Kolchak, poured a tub of cold water on the Vlasov representative. The Western allies will not deal with Vlasov and the ROA, just as they are not going to use Hitler's troops for the war against the USSR

By the end of April, [the 1st division of the ROA under the command of Bunyachenko arrived in Czechoslovakia and settled down north of Prague. It included people from the Kaminsky brigade, as well as from units of the SS Brigadeführer Siegling - Russians and Belarusians, mostly former "self-defense" policemen. Along the way, Bunyachenko skillfully evaded German orders and did not engage in hostilities against the Soviet troops. A little later, the 2nd division of the ROA arrived and stood south of the Czech capital. Very soon there was a gap between the positions of Bunyachenko and Vlasov. The division commander, who had established contact with the Czech Resistance from the very beginning, believed that it was time to break with the Reich and support the Czechs, who would later find a place for the ROA in

his new state. Vlasov's point of view was that the Germans, who always kept their word, should not be betrayed, and little use would come of helping the Czech cause, since the Red Army would soon be in Prague anyway. Bunyachenko dismissed these considerations: the Germans deserve their fate, the duty of the ROA command is to save their soldiers.

In the meantime, turmoil and confusion reigned in Prague, possible only in war. The German administration of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia asked the new head of the Reich, Admiral Doenitz, to help the German garrison in Prague, which had neither tanks nor artillery. He sent 2 divisions. But on May 6 Bunyachenko's division entered Prague. The Vlasovites entered the battle against yesterday's allies under the slogans "Death to Hitler!", "Death to Stalin!". By evening they took over

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western districts of the city, the next day they crossed to the right bank of the Vltava and cut the enemy forces into two parts. At this time, they received a blow from an unexpected quarter. The Czech National Council (CNC) sent them a letter of thanks and a demand to leave Prague. This was done under pressure from the communists who were members of the Soviet - primarily Josef Smrkovsky, the future hero of 1968. Bunyachenko tried to find a compromise, but to no avail. On the evening of May 7, the division left to surrender to the Americans. Bunyachenko did not heed the requests of the Czechs to leave them weapons. Some of his fighters arbitrarily remained in Prague. According to some reports, about 300 Vlasovites died in Prague. On May 7, several Americans appeared in Prague, who informed the Czechs that Germany had capitulated and there was no point in continuing the fight.

Sometimes you can hear that the Vlasovites saved Prague, otherwise it would have suffered the fate of Warsaw. This is an exaggeration. In May 1945, the Germans had neither the strength nor the desire for such an undertaking. There was no [Hitler] to give cannibalistic orders. About 7,000 Czechs died during the uprising. If Bunyachenko's fighters had not intervened, there would have been more victims. As an ironic footnote to this episode, it is worth mentioning that among the "saviors of Prague" there were many who committed atrocities in Warsaw in 1944.

Theoretically, the Germans again became the masters of Prague, but, knowing that the war was over, they did not want to fight anymore. And when, on May 8, the CHNS suggested that they capitulate, but leave the city with weapons in their hands, they agreed. Leaving heavy equipment, they moved to the American zone to surrender there. On the morning of May 9, Konev's troops, units of the 3rd and 4th Guards Tank Armies, entered Prague.

THE CAPTURE OF VLASOV

On May 10-11, the Red Army accepted the surrender and fought separate battles on the territory of the Czech Republic and Austria. Army Group Center capitulated only on May 11. Nevertheless, on the whole, the Germans disciplinedly complied with the order of surrender, which cannot be said about our compatriots who found themselves in the camp of enemies.

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On May 10, the 1st division of the ROA broke into the zone of operations of the American troops. Vlasov, who was at Bunyachenko's headquarters, tried to enter into negotiations with the Americans, but ran into a demand for unconditional surrender. On this day, after a shootout, a part of the headquarters of the 2nd division of the ROA, which was leaving for the West, fell into Soviet captivity. The denouement was approaching.

Having missed Hitler, Stalin certainly wanted to grab Vlasov. 1| In May, reconnaissance of the advanced units of the 25th Tank Corps (commander Major General B. Fominykh) (of the 1st Ukrainian Front discovered the location of the |th division and Vlasov's headquarters. After that, the task was delivered to "find and capture Vlasov at all costs", and if he was under the protection of the Americans, "steal". The Soviet secret services unsuccessfully tried to kidnap Vlasov since 1943. This time, the task fell to the commander of the motorized rifle battalion, Captain M. Yakushov, and the representative of Smersh, Lieutenant Ignashkin.

On May 12, they penetrated the location of the Vlasov division. Here Yakushov met with the captain of the ROA 1|. Kuchinsky and after a short conversation, the content of which remained unknown, persuaded the latter to go over to the side of the Red Army, together with a battalion subordinate to him.

After that, two captains and a lieutenant of the Smersh made their way into the American zone, but were stopped by an American patrol at a fork in the road. At that moment, a convoy of cars passed by them in a westerly direction, among which Kuchinsky identified the car of the commander of the 1st division of the ROA. Ignoring the protests of the Americans, the captains rushed off in their car, overtook the column and parked their car across the road. The column stopped. Kuchinsky and Yakushov began an inspection and in one of the cars they found Vlasov covered with blankets. On the order of Yakushov to follow him, the commander of the ROA refused, resisted and tried to escape, but was caught with the help of his own driver I. Kamzolov. On the way to the Soviet headquarters, Vlasov once again tried to escape, jumping out of the car on the move, but was again caught. Bunyachenko was more fortunate. He managed to escape and hide in the location of the American troops.

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TOAST ABOUT THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE

(The material of the book was used: Lebedintsev A.Z., Mukhin Yu.I. Fathers-commanders. Stars on shoulder straps - stars on graves. Moscow, 2004)

On May 24, 1945, Joseph Stalin called the entire top generals of the Red Army to the Victory Banquet. He raised the first toasts, according to Georgian custom, to the guests. His last toast at that banquet, one of his most famous speeches - Speech by comrade I.V. Stalin at a reception in the Kremlin in honor of the commanders of the Red Army.

This toast became the repentance of the head of the USSR to the Russian people, who suffered because of his mistakes. The Russian people were especially singled out primarily because of the disproportionate nature of their losses during the war. At the same time, the toast unequivocally indicates who won the war - the people who won, despite the mistakes of the leadership.

Probably proclaiming his last toast at this banquet, Stalin expected the generals to respond in return - for the soldier who won, despite the mistakes of these generals. But this did not happen, the generals raised their glasses, but not for the soldiers. Stalin endured and waited.

Of the military leaders present at this solemn event, hundreds wrote memoirs, but not one of them hinted at how the banquet went on after Stalin's toast.

Much later, on the eve of 1974, in the Central Krasnogorsk military hospital, an elderly colonel general, who during the war was deputy commander of the troops of the front and who was present at the Victory Banquet, said that he was in advanced years, but had not yet read the messages anywhere about how this feast was held for the high command [of the general staff and front-line members of the Military Council. He further said that Marshal Zhukov was at the same table with the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, but not a word was said in his personal honor. It seemed strange to everyone present. The senior military leaders began to signal him for a smoke break. Zhukov asked Stalin to take a break. The leader gave permission. He himself smoked pipes

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ku at the table, and everyone went into the smoking room. Here the commanders of the troops of the fronts asked Marshal Zhukov to start a short speech so that they could continue the toast in honor of the First Marshal of Victory.

Zhukov began his speech-toast like this: "If I were asked: when was the hardest time for me during the entire war, then I would answer that in the autumn and winter during the defense of Moscow, when the fate of the Soviet Union was practically decided."

Having listened silently to this tirade of Zhukov, Stalin suddenly interrupted him with the words: "Here you are, Comrade Zhukov, remembering the defense of Moscow. It is true that it was a very difficult time. It was the first victorious battle of our army in the defense of the capital. Do you know that many of its defenders, even generals who were wounded and distinguished themselves in battle, turned out to be not marked with awards and may not receive them, since they became disabled!"

To this reproach, Zhukov replied as follows: "Comrade Stalin, like you, I was also not awarded for this battle, although almost all employees of the General Staff were awarded the Orders of Lenin (Shaposhnikov, Antonov, Vatutin, Shtemenko, etc.). I fully admit that I made a miscalculation in this matter, and we will correct it."

Here Stalin slammed his fist on the table so hard that the crystal leg of the tall wine glass broke off and the red wine spilled onto the tablecloth. The leader, interrupting Zhukov, said: "And at the same time, you did not forget to reward your bl ... s." There was a deathly silence, during which Stalin got up, retired from the table and never returned.

AFTERWORD

My story has come to an end. There is much more I would like to say:

How Hitler destroyed the Jews.

About German atrocities in the USSR

How Stalin evicted entire nations.

About the ethnic cleansing of 15 million Germans from East Prussia, Pomerania, Silesia and the Sudetenland.

About Soviet robberies and violence in Germany and the liberated countries.

But you can't say everything.

What remains to be said: war is always horror and destruction.

I fully share the feelings of General Sherman when he said:

"I am tired of war to death. Her fame is all talk. War is Hell."

NOTES

CHUIKOV AND ZHUKOV: LOVE WITHOUT JOY

The two heroes of the Great Patriotic War could not stand each other, and many details of the time are manifested in their confrontation. Our main source is the statements of Chuikov, who has disliked Zhukov since the time of Stalingrad. From the very beginning it is necessary to make a bibliographic reservation. The marshal's memoirs, *The End of the Third Reich*, mentioned above, published in the *October* magazine in 1964, were published in 1973 as a separate book. However, the text in it was substantially revised, and the sharpness disappeared. Therefore, I will refer to the journal, the original version. Unfortunately, the quotes will have to be given in reverse translation from English, since I do not have the Russian text.

Chuikov speaks disapprovingly of Zhukov the commander and Stalin's deputy at Headquarters. I am not going to analyze or evaluate these statements. Let's start with general dissatisfaction (p. 69):

"[The generals, who had the opportunity to lead their troops on the offensive, could see and feel how the German fascist army weakened after 1943, how its morale and stamina in battle fell. At the same time, our offensive impulse increased every day, morale and courage grew by leaps and bounds.

It is therefore difficult to understand why the Headquarters and the front command planned such a slow pace of the offensive at the beginning of 1945. We mentally multiplied their figures by two and were sure that the troops would advance 25-30 km per day.

The next passage shows Chuikov's feelings towards Zhukov. During the meeting before the start of the Vistula-Oder operation, the following dialogue took place (p. 71-72):

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"The artillery will strike at seven in the morning," said Zhukov.

"Not a very good time," I protested.

- Why?

- The main artillery and air strike should be two hours later, when it is light.

- Why? Zhukov repeated.

Because it will give us an edge.

"And when will we start reconnaissance in force?"

"It's early, around seven, while it's still dark, after a short twenty-minute artillery preparation.

"I refuse to understand you," Zhukov got angry. — A short artillery preparation in the dark... Why in this case should the artillery fire in the dark, and at other times wait until light?

I explained that the infantry and artillerymen knew the enemy's forward positions well, so the attackers, moving in the dark, would not lose their orientation and direction of attack. Then, after one and a half to two hours, when it becomes light, they will hit the second line of defense. At the same time, artillery and aviation will not make a mistake in choosing targets, and the attacking units will clearly see their landmarks. |

Zhukov had to agree. With this sketch, Chuikov illustrates Zhukov's tactical illiteracy. The latter tries to speak as little as possible about the illustrious commander. The lecture given by Chuikov to the front commander is described by Zhukov as follows (vol. 2, pp. 260-261):

"In order to make the preparation of the operation more purposeful, the Military Council of the front decided to hold a game reflecting the upcoming operation. All army commanders, members of the Military Councils, chiefs of staff, commanders of individual corps, deputy commander for the rear of the front, commanders and chiefs of military branches and services were involved. The front headquarters brilliantly coped with the preparation of this game, and it was interesting and instructive.

The next interesting episode relates to the capture of Lodz. According to the plan of the Headquarters and the front command, the Chuikov troops were to approach this city on the tenth or twelfth day of the offensive. In real life it happened on the sixth. The front therefore revised the pace of troop advance, increasing it to 25-30 km per day. But immediately after this

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Chuikov received new instructions: in connection with the lengthening of supply lines, to reduce the speed of the offensive by 5-8 km per day. Chuikov ignored this amendment (p. 93):

"This order took us by surprise. It was not clear why it was necessary to reduce the pace of the advance of the troops, who were moving in perfect order and combat readiness. It would seem that, on the contrary, it was necessary to act as energetically as possible in order to take advantage of the enemy's confusion and go to Berlin without delay.

Chuikov and his people could be proud that they captured Lodz ahead of schedule, in Zhukov's memoirs this event is reflected in the extremely impersonal way (p. 270):

"[On January 9, the city of Lodz was taken ..."

And here is Chuikov's reaction to receiving an order to take Posen (Poznan) on the move:

"This order clearly showed that the command and headquarters of the front had no idea about the actual situation. Obviously, neither front-line intelligence nor the Headquarters knew about the powerful fortress of Poznan and its garrison. It's just easy to say: take Goznan in one day!"

The writer Vasily Grossman, who was with Chuikov at that time, wrote in his unpublished diaries (quoted from Beevor, p. 83):

"All this time, Chuikov did not stop being offended by Zhukov's decision to leave him for the capture of Poznan. He wondered sarcastically how such experienced Soviet intelligence could have overlooked such a detail that Poznań was a first-class military fortress. "Did no one know that it is one of the most powerful fortresses in all of Europe? We thought we could take her from the march. But it didn't work out."

Zhukov did not say a word that Poznan was a surprise for the front command. He simply laid the blame on Chuikov (p. 277):

"... the fortress and the city of Poznan, which were far behind the front lines, were still in the hands of the enemy and until February 23 were not taken by the troops personally led by V.I. Chuikov.

The crown of Chuikov's contemptuous attitude towards Zhukov is, of course, the episode with the Kustrin fortress. The 1st Belorussian Front reported on its capture back in February, for which reason there was a salute. Let's hear what happened next:

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On March 24, Colonel-General Mikhail Sergeevich Malinin, Chief of Staff of the Front, called me.

- When is the 8th Guards going to take Kustrin? - he asked.

"According to the report signed by the chief of staff of the fleet," I replied, not without irony, "the fortress and the city of Kustrin were taken by the troops of the 5th shock army back in February. Many guns were fired in Moscow on this occasion. Why take it a second time? Moreover, he is in the band of the 5th shock.

General Malinin had to admit that many ridiculous things happen in war, unfortunately, Kustrin is one of them.

Here Marshal Zhukov intervened in the conversation, who bluntly said that mistakes happen and they need to be corrected.

I replied that by the time he arrived in Moscow, the fortress would be taken, but I asked for air support, including dive bombers. He promised that I would get everything I needed."

There is no mention of the second capture of Kustrin in Zhukov's memoirs.

But this episode is described not only in Chuikov's memoirs (see Kead, AtPopu apa Rama E15Ver. TVe {a| o! Vet, p. 273).

To show that Chuikov did not invent these examples of Zhukov's tactical naivete and often illiteracy, it is worth citing the opinion of another witness, General Grigorenko. We are talking about the fighting at Khalkhin Gol in 1939. Commander Zhukov commanded the 1st army group there. A graduate of the Academy of the General Staff, Grigorenko was appointed to the headquarters of the Far Eastern Front, commanded by Stern. The young officer was given the task of mapping out the disposition of Zhukov's army as outlined in his combat order. With surprise, Grigorenko noticed that the order took up 25 pages of typewritten text. It was unusual and not very practical. When reading the document, it turned out that the order was given not to army formations, but to various temporary formations: "Such and such a platoon, such and such a company, such and such a battalion, such and such a regiment, such and such a division with one anti-tank gun , such and such a platoon, such and such a battery, such and such a regiment

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defend such and such a line, preventing the enemy from breaking through in such and such a direction. Other paragraphs of the order were formulated similarly. In general, there was no army. She broke up into groups. The commander commanded not divisions, brigades, individual regiments, but detachments.

Faced with the extreme activity of the Japanese and their constant infiltration to the rear, Zhukov, without knowing it, repeated the experience of General Kuropatkin during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905.

This experience was so caustically ridiculed in the military-historical literature that it was hard to imagine that someone would ever repeat it. Zhukov, who never studied at the academy, and apparently had no time to study the experience of the Russo-Japanese War on his own, followed in the footsteps of Kuropatkin.

Zhukov remained at this level until the very end of the war. This was facilitated by a bizarre set of circumstances. Zhukov's combat experience before Khalkhin Gol was limited to a squadron. Against the Japanese, he was given command of many thousands of troops. The operation ended in defeat for the Japanese, but this victory had a bitter aftertaste. The Japanese 6th Army consisted of about 38 thousand soldiers and officers with 135 tanks and 250 aircraft. The Soviet group outnumbered it twice, in tanks - three times. At the field airfields under the command of Smushkevich, an air army consisting of more than 500 fighters and light bombers was concentrated. Therefore, the outcome of the battle was not in doubt, although the Soviet losses were tangible and exceeded the Japanese.

Zhukov broke a lot of firewood in the Far East, but the winners are not judged, especially since Stern stopped his Kuropatkin experiment just in time. Both received the title of Hero, the only trouble is that in the eyes of Stalin, Zhukov acquired a reputation as a first-class commander. Less than two years later, this cavalryman with two classes from the city school was the chief of the General Staff. In the summer of 1941, he immediately received the front under his command. Again, the quality of his command did not interest the leader. I leave it to the reader to decide for himself whether Zhukov is to blame for not being able to acquire military knowledge, or whether it is worth writing this down as a liability for Comrade Stalin.

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MARSHAL ZHUKOV WITHOUT embellishment

Zhukov is a creature, a product, a brainchild of Stalin. Without Stalin, there would be no Zhukov. In fact, for the first 20 years of service in the Red Army, he did not get military laurels, during the Civil War he did not show himself in anything special. Everything changed after Khalkhin Gol in 1939. The operation was successful, although not all reviews of Zhukov's actions are positive. Stalin desperately needed this victory and came just in time - in the hot pursuit of a conspiracy with Hitler. From that moment on, the leader believed in Zhukov and took him under his wing. The obscure corps commander became an army general and commander of the key Kyiv district, shortly after that - the chief of the General Staff. Not a bad career for a former non-commissioned officer with two classes from the city school! Zhukov shares with Stalin and Timoshenko the responsibility for the initial defeats of 1941. He is in

in particular, he ignored the experience of the war in France and did not at all appreciate the German tank breakthroughs that so tormented the Red Army in the first months of the war.

Everyone saw that Zhukov was a useless staff officer, and finally Stalin realized. He replaced him, but... sent him to command the front. So the general, who had no experience of modern warfare, began to dispose of huge human contingents and a lot of equipment. Clausewitz once remarked that many field marshals would not be able to command a regiment. Zhukov from this category. At the same time, in Stalin's eyes, he was an ideal front commander - decisive, energetic, extremely ruthless. Zhukov never lost his head, he was ready to fight to the last Soviet soldier. Fortunately for him, Stalin stood behind him near Moscow with ten reserve armies.

I grew up considering Zhukov a great commander, the savior of the Motherland and the conqueror of Berlin. So then many thought. In my student years, I was literally taken aback by my great-uncle Matvey. He was what is called a military bone — in 1940, after high school, he went to an infantry school, served throughout the war and 30 years after it. He retired as a colonel - after the Six-Day War, the ranks of generals were not awarded to Jews under any circumstances. So, having heard my enthusiasm about Zhukov,

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Matvey cut off: "He is a butcher, and nothing more! At the front, everyone knew: where Zhukov appeared, expect colossal losses of our TROOPS there.

Alas, the presence of Zhukov at any site guaranteed mountains of corpses. Here are some figures of Soviet losses under his leadership: the defense of Moscow in the 41st - 514 thousand killed and missing, 144 thousand wounded, in total - 658 thousand; counteroffensive near Moscow — 140,000, 231,000 and 370,000, respectively. The total total losses of the Red Army in these two operations amounted to more than 1 million people. Zhukov's other military achievements are no better. Take, for example, his favorite offspring - the offensive of the Kalinin and Western fronts in the Rzhev-Sychevka sector (November 24-December 16, 1942). The idea of this operation (code name "Mars") belonged personally to Zhukov, planning and implementation took place under his leadership. The operation failed and was deleted from the Soviet history of the war, but a terrible trace remained - 260 thousand killed, half a million wounded. Finally, during the capture of Berlin [Zhukov's 1st Belorussian Front lost 156 thousand people in three weeks, including about 28 thousand killed. We have to admit that Comrade Zhukov knew how to lose his own troops both in defense and on the offensive.

Stalin did not care about these chilling results. Troops, i.e. manpower or cannon fodder, he always had in abundance: in June-October 1941, only through mobilization, he received 32 new armies. Stalin ranked Zhukov among his circle, and his trusted people of the leader got away with everything. One has only to take the track records of Tymoshenko, Golikov, Budyonny, Mekhlis. Every now and then you come across catastrophes and failures of the highest level: Kyiv, Kharkov, Crimea, Moscow region, Voronezh... So what? Stalin could scold them, sometimes demote them or temporarily remove them, but they remained his faithful squires and received new appointments.

Of course, one can talk on many pages about Zhukov's military genius, about his art of fighting, but one should not forget that we are talking about a steam roller, a stone crusher, a meat grinder. Here is an observation from Yerenenko's diary: "... Zhukovsky operational art is five or six times superior in strength, otherwise he will not get down to business, he does not know how to fight not in quantity and builds his career on blood."

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After the war, the marshal fell into disgrace and came to naught. Stalin's death seemed to have helped revive Zhukov's career, largely through the temporary rise of his war-time political commissar, Bulganin. But without Stalin, Zhukov was nothing, and he soon proved it. In the autumn of 1957, Zhukov vigorously supported, according to some, saved Khrushchev when he clashed with his Politburo colleagues Malenkov, Molotov and Kaganovich. Zhukov was made a member of the Politburo, but not for long. Khrushchev was rapidly moving towards sole power, for this reason the savior Zhukov was a thorn in his eye. Zhukov was sent to rest.

Under Brezhnev, Zhukov's isolation was weakened. He was allowed to publish his memoirs, though at the price of a humiliating compromise. I had to compose a fantastic episode that, while in Novorossiysk, Zhukov supposedly was going to consult with Colonel Brezhnev, but did not find him.

Zhukov's Memoirs and Reflections is a strange book. The subjective element in it is as strong as it seems to be in any other similar work. Zhukov, when he needs it, changes dates, even invents episodes. What is his story about the conversation with Stalin on July 29 worth? 194 | Not only is Zhukov's name not in Stalin's Visitor's Journal for this date. Zhukov inspires the reader that he was removed from the Chief of the General Staff for valor: he said directly to Stalin that Kyiv would have to be abandoned. But at the end of July, Guderian was near Smolensk and the decision to send him to the Ukraine was not made until 23 August. Another invention of Zhukov relates to a conversation with Stalin at the beginning of September 1941. According to Zhukov, the conversation took place on the 9th and a significant part of it was devoted to the situation near Kiev (at that time it was critical); Stalin allegedly asked who to appoint there, then Zhukov recommended Timoshenko, to which the leader agreed. According to the Visitors' Journal and other sources, Zhukov visited Stalin on the 11th and was let into his office at the same time as Timoshenko. Stalin decided in advance to send the latter to Kyiv and Zhukov did not need advice, especially since Zhukov's call was in connection with his appointment to Leningrad. In a word, Zhukov's memoirs should be read with caution.

Many pages of the book cannot be qualified as memoirs or reflections. It's just padding, filler: extensive borrowings from reference books, couple histories

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ti and other ideologically verified sources. For example, in the chapter "Participation in the Civil War" the first 15 pages are devoted to the general situation of the young Soviet Republic. The reader receives information about the Entente, about Lenin and Frunze, and about many other things of this kind, but the modest cavalryman Zhukov is not yet there. What is it - inflating the page or an attempt to say something, just not to talk about your insignificant role? Perhaps both.

Zhukov, of course, was not alien to the material benefits of life. Here is an interesting illustration. On January 1948, agents of the MGB, on Stalin's personal order, carried out a covert search in the Marshal's Moscow apartment. They searched for trophy jewels, but did not find anything special. In the safe, however, lay two dozen gold watches with precious stones, about fifteen gold pendants and rings, as well as other items made of gold.

Three days later, the Chekists raided Zhukov's dacha in Rublev. There, a different picture awaited them. In more than 50 chests and suitcases, as well as a shaft, on the walls and on the floor of the rooms, there were over 4,000 meters of expensive fabrics: silk, brocade, pan velvet, wool; 323 sable, monkey, fox, seal and astrakhan skins; 44 carpets and large tapestries of expensive work, taken from Potsdam and other palaces and houses in Germany; 55 "valuable large size classical paintings in artistic frames"; 7 large boxes with expensive porcelain and crystal dishes; 2 drawers with silver cutlery and tea utensils.

All these finds are described in detail in the report of the Minister of State Security V.S. Abakumov to Stalin. We read further (Military archives of Russia. M., 1993, pp. 184-190):

"In addition, in all the rooms of the dacha, on the windows, whatnots, tables and bedside tables, there are a large number of bronze and porcelain vases and figurines of artistic work, as well as all kinds of knick-knacks of foreign origin...

All furnishings, from furniture, carpets, crockery, decorations, to window curtains, are foreign, mostly German. There is literally not a single thing of Soviet origin in the dacha, with the exception of the paths that lie at the entrance to the dacha.

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There is not a single Soviet book, but on the other hand, there are a large number of books in bookcases in beautiful bindings with gold embossing, exclusively in German.

Entering the house, it is difficult to imagine that you are near Moscow, and not in Germany.

Zhukov had to write an explanatory note to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks A. Zhdanov and admit his mistakes:

"... I admit that I am very guilty that I didn't hand over all this junk I didn't need somewhere to the warehouse, hoping that no one needed it.

I give a strong Bolshevik oath not to make such mistakes and stupidities.

I am sure that the Motherland, the great leader comrade Stalin and the party will still need me.

A cult has long been formed around Zhukov's personality. For the admirers of the marshal, the ruthless waste of his own troops, monkey skins and similar pendants are just annoying trifles, "unnecessary junk". They can be understood. In the affairs of religion reason, facts, logic mean very little. On the other hand, everyone is free to choose their idols and their heroes. Lawless Heart...

The most opposite opinions are currently being expressed about Zhukov as a commander. For example, the official version: "G.K. Zhukov became a commander and not just a commander, but an outstanding commander, having, in fact, neither the appropriate military education nor the general one. All that was in his, so to speak, asset was two classes of a city school. He did not graduate from any academies and had no completed education. All he had was a head on his shoulders. To this we can add courses to improve, which, of course, cannot be attributed to any fundamental education, and they are called courses to improve what a person already has, i.e. practical experience. Indeed, how many such nuggets has given Rus' during its existence!" (Commanders. Collection. M., 1995, p. 20.)

At the same time, a number of researchers question his military genius. So, Marshal A.I. Eremenko wrote in

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in his diary in February 1943: "It should be said that Zhukovsky's operational art is five to six times superior in strength, otherwise he will not get down to business, he does not know how to fight not in numbers and builds his career on blood" (cited in: B. Sokolov, Mikhail Tukhachevsky, Smolensk, 1999, p. 352).

The modern Sovietologist I. Bunich writes: "Zhukov has long turned into a myth, which everyone, depending on the goal, considers at their own discretion, but with the obligatory knixen "great commander". Twenty-six million dead exist, as it were, apart from Zhukov, and he - apart from them. But this cannot go on for long. Such a monstrous number of dead will inevitably absorb the myth of the "great commander", and if Zhukov is not forgotten at all, then they will not be remembered very often, which is already observed" (Bunich I. Operation "Thunderstorm", or Mistake in the third sign, Book 1. St. Petersburg, 1994, p. 331).

LOSSES

Accepted loss figures:

Military and civilians: USSR - 20 million killed, Germany - 9.5 million.

Military: USSR - 13.6 million killed, Germany - 3 million.

(Ohhyuga, r. 341)

Other data:

Soviet losses - 26-27 million. According to Volkogonov (E4avon oŷ Zaļp, 1991, p. 505).

By operations:

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Operation

and gone missing

and gone missing

1/8/1942 | 4/20/1942 |102 | 272.320 | 504.569 | 776.889

6/28/1942 |7/24/1942 |26 |370,522 | 197.825 | 568.347

7/17/1942 | 11/18/1942 | 124 | 323.856 | 319.986 | 643,842 S. Caucasus 7/25/1942 | 12/31/1942 | 159 | 192.791 | 181.120 | 373.911

Rzhev - 7/30/1942 | 8/23/1942 r |51482 149.201 | 193.683 Sychevka

Stalingrad 75 |154,885 | 330,892 | 485,777 11/24/1942 | 12/16/1942

22 |260,000 | 500,000 | 760,000

5 million 700 thousand were captured, 3 million 300 thousand died in captivity, 57%, 2 million died by the beginning of 1942; of these, 600,000 were killed immediately.

Wehrmacht losses | sept. 1939 - 31 Jan. 1945 (all theaters) (Oh Yuga, p. 371):

1810061 191338 1387 701

Losses of different countries (Ohyuga, p. 225):

Total losses, military Country ri, % of the population and civilians, thousand people

Rzhev — Vyazma

Voronezh — Vorosh

Stalingrad

Rzhev — Sychevka

And =

Krivosheev's data: The Soviet Union drew 34,476,700 men. Germany - 21,107,000 people.

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THE USSR:

The total direct human losses of the country for all the years of the Great Patriotic War are estimated at 26.6 million people.

The irretrievable losses of the Red Army, Navy, border and internal troops amounted to 11,944,100 people. In the First World War, these losses amounted to 4,467,800 people.

The total demographic irretrievable losses of the Armed Forces of the USSR amounted to 8,668,400 servicemen
list composition.

Germany:

By the time of the surrender, 4 million 100 thousand people remained in the ranks. There were 700 thousand people in hospitals in Germany. During the war [6 million 307 thousand people died. Of these, irretrievable losses amounted to [1 million 844 thousand people (killed and died from wounds and diseases, missing - 4 million 457 thousand people. Captured - 7 million 387 thousand people).

Another loss amounted to 4 million 463 thousand people. Of these: dismissed due to injury and illness for a long time as unfit for military service (disabled), deserted - 2 million 463 thousand people; 2 million people were demobilized and sent to work in industry.

1933-1938

Aristotle says that a monarchy that does not allow its subjects the political right to express their thoughts turns into tyranny. On the other hand, in a republic (polity) a demagogue can lead to a similar degeneration by appealing to the baser instincts of the mob (disk 2, track 17).

Hitler Takes Control of the Army (Seoygeu R Meragreee, ne N@er\$ Ny Sottapa, Chtueg\$Nu Prez\$ o! Kapzaz, 2000).

In the spring of 1934 [Hitler and Minister of War Blomberg entered into a secret agreement, the so-called. "Deutschland compact" (they were on board the battleship "Deutschland", sailing from Kiel to Koenigsberg). Blomberg, on behalf of the army, agreed to support Hitler in his quest to become head of state after the death of the aged President Hindenburg. In response, the Führer promised to rein in Röhm's stormtroopers and ensure "the hegemony of the Reichswehr in all military affairs." Blomberg then agreed that the Nazi emblem (swastika) would become part of the military uniform.

Hitler in a short time completely subjugated all the organs of command and control of the army. The bastion of army independence, the General Staff, very quickly lost its former greatness and elitist immunity. After February 4, 1938, only memories remained of this, although even earlier, in 1935-1936, Hitler, when making strategic decisions (the reoccupation of the Rhineland, the restoration of a mass army), did not think to consult with the generals.

By the time of the Anschluss of Austria, Hitler was the only and undoubted master of the German military machine. This is not a

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Lalo him a great commander, he was, however, an outstanding dictator. It can be added here that, firstly, luck, good luck played a role, and secondly, blind sympathy, even adoration for the Germans, including the generals. Be that as it may, Hitler could make military decisions alone, which he did until the end of the war. The opposition from the highest military officials was minimal, the younger officers followed him willingly, even joyfully. "By 1938 Hitler was enormously popular in [Germany and in the army. Most of the higher officers adored him, the only exception being the few with whom he came into close contact... By this time the junior officers had already absorbed huge doses of National Socialist propaganda; the constant influx of new Nazi materials, which they received with the full support of people like Blomberg and Brauchitsch, only increased their devotion."

The muted resistance of Beck and his group was based on their pessimistic assessment of the situation. They, like the Fuhrer, wanted to capture Czechoslovakia, but because of the fear of a European war, they wanted to postpone the operation for a couple of years, when the German army was in full force.

The German generals were sympathetic from the very beginning to the goals of the Nazis: strong power, suppression of democracy, and so on. They knew about the impending massacre with Remus, but when it happened, they were shocked by its cruelty and the fact that not only attack aircraft suffered. In general, the outcome was satisfactory, and they resigned themselves. It was exactly the same during the removal of Fritsch on a false charge, the court of honor acquitted him, but the rehabilitation did not take place. Chief of the General Staff Beck agreed with the attack on Czechoslovakia, he disagreed with the Fuhrer only in terms.

Purge in the Red Army

We cannot dwell here on the causes and springs of the mass beating of command personnel, this is another, extensive and still open topic.

* Seoygeu R Meragree, po4e Hsheg\$ Nyup Sottap@a, ChpmegsYyu Prezz oy Kapza\$, 2000, p. 62.

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Whether it was Nazi sabotage, Stalin's massacre to consolidate his personal power, or the process of self-destruction of the Bolshevik Party, the result was devastating.

The reader interested in details will find them in the books of John Erickson, O.F. Suvenirov and our work with Yu. Alekseev in 1977, from which the following table is taken (V. Rapoport, Yu. Alekseev, p. 289):

equivalent proportion of deaths, %

sl

Modern

E O OZOE O A O E ET AO O O O I O E [Arykovvsar I [tenerstoovniya [18 [15 [in [15] [100 [Ao [rrymeyeni [88 | [8 [9 [swamps [veayny [6 [8 | 658 GPOFayamny [measures] [89 [8 [8 eye [her [198 [96] AND [85] 63. AND E CO OS WITH EE

major general

15. Brigcommissar COLONEL OR 36 | 34 34 | 94 major general

And yy lieutenant

IN EO NIE WEN honey. AI AND SEE Veterinary Services 394

2

share of deaths, %

20. Divintendant Major General

engineer general - 21. Divisional engineer r r major

* As of 1.1.1937. ** I WOULD. Gamarnik shot himself on 31 May 1937 to avoid arrest. Notes:

= p = 5 E ry

\$ Z -- = m o <= 5 o. m F E 9 <

You can find other data, somewhat different, but this does not change things. The command staff suffered heavy losses: about two-thirds for all ranks above colonel, and even more on the top floor.

In January 1938, the Soviet Navy was withdrawn from the subordination of the People's Commissariat of Defense and allocated to a special department - the People's Commissariat of the Navy. In March, the Main Military Council of the Navy, headed by Secretary of the Central Committee Zhdanov, was created to oversee it. At the same time, an appropriate body for the army was formed - the Main Military Council of the Red Army, it included I.V. Stalin and his henchmen during the Civil War - K.E. Voroshilov (chairman), S.M. Budyonny, L.3. Mehlis, Gl. Kulik, E.A. Shadenko, as well as B.M. Shaposhnikov, V.K. Blucher, I.F. Fedko (the last two were soon destroyed). Previously, since 1934, there was a Military Council under the People's Commissar; One of its 80 members died during the repression.

In 1938, the thesis was put forward and vigorously promoted that the Soviet fleet should be the strongest in the world. The former notion of the defense of territorial waters was discarded, now the Soviet Navy had to transfer the war to enemy seas. On July 2, Kalinin, speaking in Leningrad, declared that since the Soviet Union was going to overtake all the major capitalist powers, the Soviet fleet would surpass all others in the world, including the British.

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From the point of view of real possibilities, this was an attempt with unsuitable means, but it was in the spirit of the Soviet military doctrine of that time: "Fight with little blood and on foreign territory."

Soviet citizens sang with faith in their hearts:

We do not want an inch of foreign land, But we will not give up our own inch.

Or:

But if a seasoned enemy climbs to us, He will be beaten everywhere and everywhere ...

Or:

Our tread is firm, And the enemy will never walk through our republics ...

In the popular film "If there is war tomorrow", the Red Army almost instantly dealt with the invading aggressor.

ARMED FORCES OF THE PARTIES

Arms production

Germany was hopelessly behind in arms production. See below the data for 1942, then it was even worse.

PRODUCTION OF WEAPONS BY THE GREAT POWERS, 1942

(THOUSAND UNIT)

Software O Software OO PONY IO OOO 1.542 | 651 | 662 | 188 | 1.01 | 27.0 | 24.9 | 1,854 595 | 1,438 | 284 [106 [86 [17.7 | 29.2_ 239_

396

Shotguns

Automatic pistols Machine guns Mortars

Tanks Aircraft Ships

=>= — = 5 > I VE BV

Assault rifles and Mortars Aircraft

F

> = o a E - ® = [7 o © = > = = © = db" < = = [^ = =

[7"

"<

[USSR 4,049 | 1.506 | 356 | 127 | 230.0 | 24.4 |217 | 49|

Total have 693 | 6186 | 3596 |1302| 421 | 270.2 64.3 | 2,112 nicknames of the Axis Power

Germany ____| 1.370] 232 | 7 | 41 | 98 | 622 [11.6] 244

[Italy || [63165 | 85 | 15 | 67 | 164. [Japan | 440 [0 [71 [13 | 15 [121 63] 68 _

ao ABOUT EE [Ratio | || | | ||

a ry front

Western and

Pacific | 2.4 27.0 5.5 | 9.2 3.0 7.5 | 2.5

fronts

PRODUCTION OF WEAPONS IN THE USSRIn 1942

About Aviation GO Fighters: — la-5 1.943

8

| Bombarders OOO OOO OOO T-3

5.100 4.272 8.957 11.142

397

and ki: 4 4.414 8.106

AND I:

Anti-aircraft

In addition, the role of Lend-Lease in the Soviet economy was very significant (Yur:Λm\ulm.ogdegzofae.ChagKkzsare.pe{/zHe/z{igituove!/ZouHepaG.eaze.Ni).

The United States supplied the Soviet Union with 17,000 aircraft, 5| thousand Jeeps, 400 thousand trucks, 12 thousand tanks and armored vehicles, 8 thousand anti-aircraft guns, [05 submarines, 197 torpedo boats, 50 thousand tons of leather, 15 million pairs of boots, 3 million 700 thousand automobile tires, 2,800,000 tons of steel, 800,000 tons of chemical products, 340,000 tons of explosives, 2,600,000 tons of petroleum products, 4,700,000 tons of food and 81,000 tons of rubber (Fatal Decisions, p. [14).

Front commanders by theater of operations

Source: V.V. Pokhlebkin. The Great War and the Failed Peace. M., 1997. S. 202-208.

Northern theater of operations

northern front

1. Lieutenant General M.M. Popov (June 24 - August 23, 1941)

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Karelian Front

1. Lieutenant General, Colonel General V.A. Frolov (September 1941 - February 1944)

2. Army General, Marshal K.A. Meretskov (February 1944 - November 1944)

Leningrad Front

[1. Lieutenant General M.M. Popov (August-September 194)

2. Marshal K.E. Voroshilov (September 1941)

3. Army General G.K. Zhukov (September 13 - October 194)

4. Major General I.I. Fedyuninsky (October 194)

5. Lieutenant General M.S. Khozin (October 1941 - June 1942)

6. Lieutenant General of Artillery, Marshal L.A. Govorov (June 1942 - February 1945)

Volkhov Front

1. Army General K.A. Meretskov (December 1941 - April 1942); (June 1942 - February 1944)

Northern defensive region

1. Lieutenant General S.I. Kabanov (August 1942 - September 1943)
2. Major General, Lieutenant General E.T. Dubovtsev (September 1943 - January 1945)

In this direction, front commanders were appointed 12 times. There were 10 of them. (Popov and Meretskov were appointed twice.)

Northwestern Theater of Operations

Northwestern Front

1. Colonel General F.I. Kuznetsov (June-July 1941)
2. Major General 1.1. Sobennikov (July-August 1941)
3. Lieutenant General P.A. Kurochkin (August 1941 - October 1942)
4. Marshal S.K. Timoshenko (Oct. 1942 - March 1943)
5. Colonel General I.S. Konev (March-June 1943)
6. Colonel General [1.A. Kurochkin (June-November 1943)

Kalinin Front

1. Colonel General I.S. Konev (October 1941 - August 1942)

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2. Lieutenant General, Colonel General M.A. Purkaev (August 1942 - April 1943)
3. Colonel General, Army General A.I. Eremenko (April-October 1943)

Commanders of the fronts were appointed 9 times in this direction. There were 7 of them. (Kurochkin and Konev were appointed twice.)

reserve front

(Situated between the North-Western and Western directions, being a reserve for both of them.)

1. Army General G.K. Zhukov (August-September 1941 [g.]
2. Marshal S.M. Budyonny (September - October 10, 1941)

October 10, 1941 merged with the Western Front.

Baltic theater of operations

1st Baltic Front

1. Army General A.I. Eremenko (October-November 1943)
2. Army General I.Kh. Bagramyan (November 1943 - February 1945)
3. February-April 1945 Commander of the Zemland group, General of the Army I.Kh. Bagramyan (the rank of Marshal I.Kh. Bagramyan was awarded in 1950)

2nd Baltic Front

1. Army General M.M. Popov (October 1943 - April 1944)
2. Army General A.I. Eremenko (April 1944 - February 1945)
3. Marshal L.A. Govorov (February-March 1945)

3rd Baltic Front

1. Colonel General, Army General I.I. Maslennikov (April-October 1944)

In this direction, front commanders were appointed 7 times. There were 5 of them. (Eremenko and Bagramyan were appointed twice.) 400

Western (Central) theater of operations

Western Front

1. Army General D.G. Pavlov (June 22-29, 1941; shot on October 16, 1941)
2. Lieutenant General A.I. Eremenko (June 29 - July 4, 1941)
3. Marshal S.K. Timoshenko (July-September 1941)
4. [Lieutenant General, Colonel General I.S. Konev (September - October 1941)
5. [General of the Army of the Civil Code. Zhukov (October 1941 - August 1942)
6. Colonel General I.S. Konev (August 1942 - February 1943)
7. Colonel General, Army General V.D. Sokolovsky (February 1943 - April 1944)
8. Colonel General I.D. Chernyakhovsky (April 1944)

Central Front (G)

1. Colonel General F.I. Kuznetsov (July-August 1941)
2. Lieutenant General M.G. Efremov (August 1943; mortally wounded on April 16, 1942)

Central Front (P)

1. Colonel General, General of the Army K.K. Rokossovsky (February-October 1943)

Reserve Fronts of the Central Direction

1. Colonel General M.A. Reuters (March 1943) March 23-27 - Kursk Front, March 27-28 - Oryol Front
2. Lieutenant General M.M. Popov (April 1943). Voronezh-Kursk direction

Bryansk Front

1. [Lieutenant General A.I. Eremenko (August-October 1941)
2. Major General G.F. Zakharov (October-November 1941)
3. [Colonel General Ya.T. Cherevichenko (December 1941 - April 1942)
4. Lieutenant General F.I. Golikov (April-July 1942)
5. Lieutenant General K.K. Rokossovsky (July-September 1942)

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6. Lieutenant General M.A. Reuter (September 1942 - June [943)
7. Colonel General M.M. Popov (June-October 1943)

Voronezh Front

1. Lieutenant General F.I. Golikov (July 1942)
2. [Lieutenant General N.F. Vatutin (July-October 1942)
3. [Colonel General F.I. Golikov (October 1942 - March 1943)
4. Colonel General N.F. Vatutin (March-October 1943)

steppe front

1. Colonel General, Army General I.S. Konev (July-October 1943)

In this direction, front commanders were appointed 206 times. There were 16 of them. Two commanders were killed. (Twice Vatutin, Popov, Reuters, Rokossovsky, Eremenko received a new appointment, and three times - Konev, Golikov.)

Southwestern and Southern theaters of operations

Southwestern Front

1. Colonel General M.P.J. Kirponos (June 22 - September 20, 1941). He died on September 20, 1941 in the battle near Lokhvitsy.
2. Marshal S.K. Timoshenko (September 20 - December 1941 | y.)
3. Lieutenant General F.Ya. Kostenko (December 1941 - April 1942). Killed in battle near Kharkov.
4. Marshal S.K. Timoshenko (April-July 1942)

5. Lieutenant General, Colonel General N.F. Vatutin (October 1942 - March 1943)

6. Colonel General, Army General of the R.J. Malinovsky (March 1943 - October 1943)

Stalingrad Front

1. Marshal S.K. Timoshenko (July 1942)

2. Lieutenant General V.N. Gordov (July-August 1942)

3. Colonel General A.I. Eremenko (August-December 1942)

Don Front |

1. Lieutenant General, Colonel General K.K. Rokossovsky (September 1942 - February 1943)

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Southeastern Front

1. Colonel General A.I. Eremenko (August-September 1942)

Southern Front (T)

1. Army General Tyulenev I.V. (June-August 1941)

2. Lieutenant General D.I. Ryabyshev (August-October 1941)

3. [Colonel General Ya.T. Cherevichenko (October - December 1941)

4. Lieutenant General, Colonel General of the R.Y. Malinovsky (December 1941 - July 1942)

Southern Front (1)

|. Colonel General A.I. Eremenko (January-February 1943)

2. Colonel-General of the R.J. Malinovsky (February-March 1943)

3. Colonel General, Army General F.Ya. Tolbukhin (March-October 1943)

Front commanders were appointed 18 times in the Southwestern and Southern directions. There were 12 of them. Two commanders were killed. (Three times appointed: Timoshenko, Eremenko, Malinovsky, twice - Rokossovsky.)

Caucasian theater of operations

Transcaucasian Front (T)

1. Lieutenant General D.T. Kozlov (August-December 1941)

Transcaucasian Front (I)

1. Army General I.V. Tyulenev (May 1942 - July 1945)

Caucasian Front

1. Lieutenant General D.G. Kozlov (December 1941 - January 1942)

Crimean front

1. Lieutenant General D.T. Kozlov (January-April 1942)

North Caucasian Front

1. Marshal S.M. Budyonny (May-August 1942)

2. Lieutenant General, Colonel General I.I. Maslennikov (January-May 1943)

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3. Lieutenant General, Colonel General I.E. Petrov (May-November 1943)

Separate Maritime Army (1)

1. Lieutenant General of the GP. Sofronov (July-October 1941)

2. [Major General I.E. Petrov (October 1941 - July 1942)

Separate Maritime Army (1)

1. Army General I.E. Petrov (November 1943 - February 1944)

2. Army General A.I. Eremenko (February - April 1944)

3. Lieutenant General K. S. Melnik (April 1944 - May 1945)

In total, commanders were appointed 12 times in this direction. There were 8 of them. (Petrov and Kozlov were appointed three times.)

Belarusian theater of operations

3rd Belorussian Front

1. Colonel General, Army General I.D. Chernyakhovsky (April 1944 - February 18, 1945). He died in battle on February 18 near the town of Melzak.

2. Marshal A.M. Vasilevsky (February-April 1945)

3. Army General I.Kh. Baghramyan (April-August 1945)

2nd Belorussian Front

1. Colonel General, P.A. Kurochkin (February-April 1944)

2. Colonel-General I.E. Petrov (April-June 1944)

3. Colonel General, Army General G.F. Zakharov (July - November 12, 1944)

4. Marshal K.K. Rokossovsky (November 12, 1944 - June 1945)

1st Belorussian Front

1. Army General, Marshal K.K. Rokossovsky (February-November 1944)

2. Marshal G.K. Zhukov (November 12, 1944 - June 1945)

The commanders of the Belorussian fronts were appointed 9 times. There were 8 of them. One commander was killed.

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Ukrainian theater of operations

1st Ukrainian Front

1. Army General N.F. Vatutin (October 1943 - March 1944). Wounded, died 15 Apr. 1944

2. Marshal G.K. Zhukov (March-May 1944)

3. Marshal I.S. Konev (May 1944 - May 1945)

2nd Ukrainian Front

1. Army General, Marshal I.S. Konev (Oct. 1943 - May 1944)

2. General of the Army, Marshal of the R.J. Malinovsky (May 1944 - June 1945)

3rd Ukrainian Front

1. Army General of the R.J. Malinovsky (Oct. 1943 - May 1944)

2. [general of the army, marshal F.I. Tolbukhin (May 1944 - June 1945)

4th Ukrainian Front

1. Army General F.I. Tolbukhin (Oct. 1943 - May 1944)

2. Colonel General, Army General I.E. Petrov (Aug. 1944 - March 1945)

3. Colonel General, Army General A.I. Eremenko (March - June 1945)

The commanders of the Ukrainian fronts were appointed 10 times. There were 7 of them. One commander was killed. (Tolbukhin, Konev, Malinovsky were appointed twice.)

Losses of the general's link, July-August 1941 (Caught in captivity)

Source: Lobp Eiskop, TNe Koa4 10 S{aipetaa, Vae C/ Prez\$, 1975, p. 490-491.

, 4th Rifle Corps, collaborated July | Major General Egorov E.A. r ru RU with the Germans, shot, , 21st Corps, commander, hanged Major General Zakutny D.E. rus, r, together with Vlasov

Was on a business trip to Zap. district, Gen.-leit. Karbyshev D.M. | in the camp - in the Resistance, flooded with water in the cold in February 1945

Major General Makarov P.G. Deputy commander, [11th mechanized corps died in the camp in the autumn of 1943

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August | Major General Muzychenko I.N. | Commander, 6th Army | En.-Major Sokolov_____ | Beginning rear service Zap. front

Major General Fedorov Artillery, 6th Army Major General Proshkin Komdiv, 98th Division

Divisional Commander, 36th Cavalry Division, shot in 1946 "for loss of control of the division and anti-Soviet agitation in captivity"

Major General Snegov M.G. Komkor, 8th Corps, was captured near Uman

Major General Abramidze Divisional Commander, 72nd Mining Division division, was taken prisoner near Uman. After the howl

Major General Zybin E.S.

we are reinstated in the ranks of the Armed Forces

Loss Statistics

Zoigse: TVe 0\$\$\$K apa Tla| UMag. \U/pu Olap' {Ve Some Esopotu SoParze t 19422*

Magk Nagiz (*T\$ 1\$ a gai sNareg Tog Kobeg Sshscape apa Is E r\$er, e45, A Shoma ayo To Step: SobSHEE apa she Royce\$ o{ OezgisNop, 1939-1945, Satyae Otueg@Tsu Rgez\$: Satbiaee (pcs erragayop).

UNR:/mmgmagilsC.as.iK/Las/zos/espapis\$/{ay/LasiYu/ Baglsop/raregz/4o{amag.r@{

Average daily

SMOLENSKAYA "SUVOROV"

G August -

October 2, 1943

428 400 28106 | 90172| 118278 | 2075 824 200 79539 |253 649 | 333 188 | 5845 TOTAL 1252 600 | OI

KURSKAYA 70 330 DEFENSIVE | 1272 700 55% 107517 | 177 847 | 9360 , [6

July 5-23, 1943

107 645

86% 343 821 | 451 466 | 7920 , °

1252 600

e ® < E E b E s i = < ©. ₪. 5: E E E 2% - ra = = 5 E =

[=-E:o=(\$\$)

406

Irrevocable

Average daily

OPERATION VIENNA

Central Front (5.7 - [1.7.43) Voronezh Front (the entire period)

738,000 15,336 18,561 [zat 534,700 27,542 46,350 | 73 892 | 3889

27 452 42606 | 70058 | 4670 Jul 12 —

317 361 | 429 890 | 11313 August 18, 1943

233300 76 856 409 000 123234 645300 | 47771 [117271 SOFTWARE SOFTWARE PONY

BELGORODSKO- 71 611

KHARKIV "RUMYANTSEV" 1 144 000 183 955 | 255 566 | 12 170

August 3–23, 1943

Voronezh Front 739,400 48,339 108,954 | 157 293 | 7490 404 600 23272 | 75001 | 98273 | 4680

Steppe front (9.7-23.7.43) ORLOVSKAYA "KUTUZOV"

1 287 600 112 529,

8.7%

EVE in tare

Irrevocable

VE Sanitary

Average daily

Kursk defensive

1 272 700 107 517 | 177 847 1 287 600 317 361 | 429,890 1,144,000 255,566

407

"Kutuzov"

"Rumyantsev"

AND W NEE

"Suvorov"

Reference data

Hierarchy of military formations

Subdivision. This word denotes all the military formations that make up the unit. Squad, platoon, company, battalion — all of them are united by one word “unit”. The word comes from the concept of division, divide. Those. part is divided into divisions.

Part. This is the main unit of the armed forces. The term “unit” most often refers to a regiment and a brigade.

Compound. By default, only a division is suitable for this term. The very word “connection” means to connect the parts. The division headquarters has the status of a unit. Other units (regiments) are subordinate to this unit (headquarters). That's all together and there is a division. However, in a number of cases, a brigade can also have the status of a compound. This happens if the brigade includes separate battalions and companies, each of which has the status of a unit in itself.

An association. This term combines a corps, an army, an army group and a front (district). The headquarters of the association is also a part to which various formations and units are subordinate.

Connections

(Zemke, [, pp. 517-518)

1. Army Group Fronts

On the Eastern Front from 4 to 5 or more | (Soviet army groups) in the 20th Mountain Army and in the Finnish From 10 to 12

army - until September 1944

2. Armies 2. Armies 2 to 4 in an army group 3 to 9 in a front Possibly an average of 5 to 7

3. Corps 3. Rifle Corps

(including the Panzer Corps) Disbanded in August 194] th,

from 2 to 7 of the army again created at the end of 1942, from 3 to 9 in the division

4. Divisions 4. Divisions From 2 to 7 in a corps From 2 to 3 in a corps

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Approved Reinforced Specially Approved Reinforced Divisions Armed Corps and Divisions

Pantsir Division 14,000 | Tank Corps 10,500 (103 to 125 tanks) up to (189 tanks) 17,000

Motorized divisions Mechanized (48 tanks) corps (186 tanks)

9 battalions 6 battalion divisions

Artillery divisions Artillery divisions (113 guns) VIZII (210 guns)

Highest military ranks (Erickson. Road to Stalingrad, p. 557)

American Soviet equivalent Reichsmarschall (Created for Hermann Go- No. shpe No. Shpering in July 1940 and applied only to him)

Marshal of the Soviet | General of the Army General Field Marshal of the Union

, No. No. No. No. Chief Marshal M No. No. No. No.

Chief General

General of Infantry, Artillery, Motorized Infantry- Colonel General Lieutenant General YOU IT.D.

Lieutenant General Lieutenant General Major General Major General Major General Brigadier General F

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Vitaly Rapoport

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"As long as there is no war!" - this slogan has been gained through suffering throughout Soviet history. The price of the Great
Victory was so great, the losses were so monstrous, and the turning point in the people's fate was so terrible that the memory of
the tragedy still hurts, already at the genetic level. Because any war, even the most just one, even the Great Patriotic War, is hell,
blood and pain, unbearable suffering and irreparable losses... One can and should glorify the Victory and honor the heroes.
But the war itself - perish it!

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